

The Adventurous Silversmith Blog History Blogging for those who aspire to be a silversmith

PLEASE NOTE THAT MANY LINKS MAY NOT WORK	2
Welcome!	2
History - Part One : ROCKS	3
Rocks - A follow up	5
Rock Redux	9
How to find your own Obi-Wan (Don)	16
My Workspace 'cause it ain't a studio!	19
Taking more care	24
Taking Care - Again	25
History - Part Two : Wire Wrap	28
Life interferes with art (mine)	34
Toolboxes: Hidden Treasures and Long Lost Memories	36
History Part Three: Silver Chains	39
Silver Mounted Cab's	42
Working on the Chain Gang	45
Ring-A-Ding (or part 1 of learning to make a ring)	48
Ring-a-Ding-Ding (part 2)	50
Ring-A-Ding-Ding-DING (part 3)	51
Misc. Musings	53
How would you rate your skill level?	55
She's baaaaacccccckkkkkk	57
Documenting (My) Work	58
Bench Tips #1 - Using Tools and Equipment From Household Items	59
Bench Tips #2 - Creating Tools and Equipment from Household Items	61
Bench Tips #3 Creating Tools and Equipment From Household Items	62
Bench Tips #4 Creating Tools and Equipment From Household Items	63
Project #1 - Octo Ring	67

The Adventurous Silversmith Blog History Blogging for those who aspire to be a silversmith

Project #2 - 'S' ring and bonus project	68
Project #3 - Planished Bangle	72
Building on Learned Skills	74
Can Jewish Girls Have An Epiphany?	74
Kinda Off Line - For a Bit	79
Rolling Mill Class and Silversmithing	79
I Beat it into Submission	82
Metal Color and More	88
Why I Love The Rio Grande Catalog(s)	91
Spoon-erism's	93
You know you're into tools when...	96
A Handful of Hammers	98
It's Hammer'n Time!!	100
Fold Forming and Using A Hydraulic Press	104
Learning & "Sunlight and Shadow"	109
Holiday Breakdown	120
Chasing the Winter Blues Away	121
Sew What! (and the call of the pitch pot)	126
My Year in Review - 2009	128
Four Days of Fun	129
Today, I AM a Metalsmith!!!	132
The final post for 2009 and a copper tray/dish	134

PLEASE NOTE THAT MANY LINKS MAY NOT WORK

Welcome!

by LAURIE JANE KERN *on* MARCH 31, 2009 ·

I have just set up this new blog and I am still learning all the options and such so there will be lots of settings, plugins and such added over the next few posts as I figure it all out.

I haven't figure it out, but I hope to allow people to post comments so you can join me on my learning experience.

I have only been making silver jewelry - chains mostly, since February. I will try to fill in the back story over the next few posts, of how I got here and where I hope to go.

I am also taking pictures of what I have made so far so I can post them too.

History - Part One : ROCKS

by LAURIE JANE KERN on APRIL 2, 2009 ·

I have always liked rocks and I am not talking specifically about sparkly stones such as diamond or other such items. I am talking about tigers eye, pyrite cubes, geodes, quartz, malachite.

Then I discovered AGATES.

AND then I discovered *AGATE SLABS!!!*

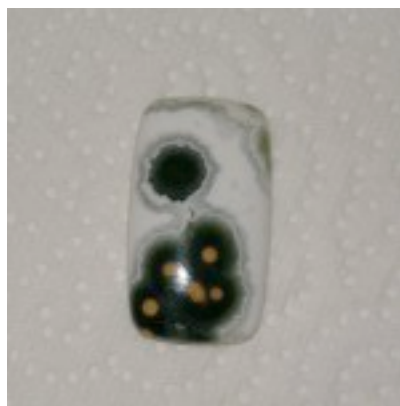
I was gathering quite a collection of slab rough when I finally went looking on ebay and bought a small flat lap machine that has a 6" diameter wheel. I had been playing with it on and off for a year, starting in 2007. I had polished a few agates but not really made any cab's.

In early 2008 a friend of ours who we met in our Gem & Mineral club offered to teach me how to make cabs. SO on a Sunday afternoon in September, I went over with a few pieces of rough. Obi-wan Don, as he shall now be called showed me how to cut an oval, circle, tear drop and triangle out of my rough. Then it was off to the 6 station cabbing grinder he has. Obi-wan walked me through 2 cabs, across the six stations. He then left to go watch a football game (it was a Sunday!).

Three hours later I went back inside with my 4 other finished cabs. Yes there was a flat spot in one, the slope was not even across the cab on another but I had made 6 cabs in 5 hours. Obi-wan said I did very good and the next time would be better.

Here is a picture of one of those cabs. Obi-wan Don's wife taught me to do wire wrapping a few weeks later so the second picture is of the final pendant.

I can now make a cab in about an hour... and now that I have all these cab's the question was "What will I do with them all?"



Ocean Jasper Cab



Ocean Jasper Cab set in wire

{ 4 comments... }

Beth Wicker 04.03.09 at 5:31 am

Beautiful - keep having fun! Learning to cab is on my “to do” list!

teribaskett 04.03.09 at 4:57 pm

These are GREAT! I cannot imagine taking a rough “chunk” of rock and turning it into a cab—all the decisions you have to make to bring out the beauty of the stone....it’s quite a gift! Rock on (oops, pun intended I believe)....Teri

Lynn Vernon 04.04.09 at 12:17 pm

I love ocean jasper and you did a fantastic job. I want to learn cabbing at some point too and your blog inspires me.

Alaina 04.29.09 at 4:20 pm

Beautiful work! I love the piece of ocean jasper you chose. I am a member of the Wisconsin Geological Society and completely relate to your love of rocks. I would love to get into the lapidary arts one day! Keep posting your new pieces!

Rocks - A follow up

The Adventurous Silversmith Blog History Blogging for those who aspire to be a silversmith

by LAURIE JANE KERN on APRIL 3, 2009 ·

Wow! and thanks for the comments - people are really reading my blog!.

Since you liked the last pictures, I thought I post just a few more pictures. Next time I will try to talk about my adventures in wire wrap land, as that is part of the path that I have taken to get here and where I want to go. I promise that with time you will see the current work.

And now for some more pictures, A cornacopia of cabs!

Sorry for the one on the left being cut off but these two are Verisite



I don't know what this is actually called but it is a type of Chalcedony, if Obi-wan Don is correct.



I picked up a rather nice, large slab of Moss (Plume) Agate. I made one, wire wrapped it and sent it a friend (picture to follow in another post. From the remaining I made these two and the next one called the Arrowhead.





These two, again came from the same slab. They are made from banded agate with lots of very clear parts. The shape on the left is what I call a Clam Shell and the shape on the right is what I call Mezzaluna. You will see these two shapes quite a bit!



This is Silver Lake Onyx. It cuts like butter!

Because the material is a bit softer than agate, it is easy to work with.

I was able to bypass the first (80 grit) wheel, and the second grit wheel (120) where I did some quick shaping and do most of the work on the 320! And hey, there is that clam shell shape again.



I have not mounted any of these YET. I plan on most of them being in pendants and a few of them being sold but at now I just have them on my table, where I love to look at them.

You will see more of my cab's in the wire wrap post but not all of my wire wrap pendants have cabs that I made, some were made by Obi-wan Don.

P.S. I don't know if I can do this here, but if you see a cab you like, drop me a line and if we can agree on a price, I just might sell it!!! (I don't have a site yet were I can sell, but that too is for another post

Rock Redux

by LAURIE JANE KERN *on* APRIL 4, 2009 ·

My hubbie - known here after as the e-Man, has pointed out that I missed posting a few of my other cabs and some of the polished rocks I have sitting on my desk.

I call this “The Plinth” it is actually one of my first pieces that I polished on my flat lap. This is a Agate from Mexico. I made a small cut on one end, saw the pretty colors and that there was druzy quartz inside and I just could not slab it, I just wanted to see the orbs of pink. Thus I started to grind off the outer rind to reveal the inner beauty. I then made a slice on the bottom so it could stand on my desk, and another cut on the other side - which can be seen in the second picture.



Free form polish to reveal whats in side

Here is the back side.



Second Side

And finally...



Showing the edge

The following are other cabs.

This is the Moss Agate, I mentioned in my prior posts. This has been sent over to Scotland, where Elisa is the proud owner.



This cab is one of the first 4 that I made. Yes, that is a flat spot on the top. The material is Mariposite, which is a mineral that is a chromium-rich variety of mica, which imparts an attractive green color to the generally white dolomitic marble in which it is commonly found. It was named for Mariposa, California, though it can be found in several places in the Sierra Nevada mountains. I collected this material on one of our road trips, and YES, we did pick it up in Mariposa - there is a nice road cut that has loose material so we could just pick it up from the side of the road and not actually hack into the road cut.



A tiny picture jasper.



Jasper - I love these with the orbs!



Crazy Lace Agate



Turatella (Fossil)



A larger Picture Jasper



Sodalite



Crazy Lace Agate



{ 1 comment... }

Beth Wicker 04.05.09 at 4:55 am

Nice cabs - sounds like you are having fun. Makes me really want to learn cabbing - too bad I don't have an Obi-wan Don!

How to find your own Obi-Wan (Don)

by LAURIE JANE KERN on APRIL 5, 2009 ·

If you read the comments from my first few posts (or if you have not) , some of the comments have been about wanting to learn to make cabs.

So in this post let me give you my idea's on how to find an Obi-Wan Don and if you can not find an Obi-Wan at least you can find some place where you can learn.

I live in Riverside County in Southern California. That is just north of San Diego County. Where I live there is not a club, but just south of the county line is Fallbrook and they have a great club. Actually it is the Fallbrook Gem & Mineral Society (FGMS) and they have been around for over 50 years.

We, the e-man and I, joined FGMS over 6 years ago and have been very active in the club. BUT the club does not have a lapidary workshop, though we do have many members who do! More about this conundrum further down.

For most of the time we were members I only collected specimens and had not fallen in love with agates, thus I had no desire to search for anyone who could teach me. It was late 2007 that my agate madness began, and it was soon after that when I found the small flat lap, which I could use at home.

The lap setup I bought was from [Inland Crafts The Swap-Top](#) - not only can it do lapidary grinding but this kit also has a saw conversion. I made the Plinth on this setup. But then I found I had agates that where to big to fit on the wheel. Whats a girl to do?

I joined another club that has a complete workshop. This is the Palomar Gem and Mineral Club and their shop is in an old strip mall but it has lots of equipment.

The club gives classes during the week, at night and on weekends. They also have open workshop other weeknights as well as most weekends. The workshop stewards are there not only to open the shop and collect the use fee (\$5.00 for 4 hours) but to answer questions and to give some instruction. See open workshop is not a class but if you ask “HOW DO I MAKE A CAB?” - they will point you at a piece of equipment and tell you what to do. As you do each step it is your job to ask questions and if so instructed, do it over, continue doing what you are working on cause you are not done, or go to the next step.

Oh! and don't forget to talk to the other members who are there using the shop. This is what I call the “SHARE AND ENJOY” part. I have seen some amazing things being done and it is another way to learn as everyone is very willing to explain what they are doing. This is partly how I found out the Palomar club also has silver workshops and faceting classes. Me bad! as I was lax in going to website and looking at the classes the club offered, cause initially I was only interested in using the shop.

It was during a open session that someone mentioned that Obi-Wan had moved to near where I live and had joined the FGMS. BTW, Don, though not called Obi-Wan at the Palomar club, was known as being a master cabber and was past president. I had to find him at the next FGMS meeting, which I did and the rest is well, HISTORY!! (Part One to be exact).

So, in conclusion here is what I suggest:

- 1) **Join a club** that has a lapidary workshop and take classes!
- 2) Just joining the club will also give you access to the equipment on open shop days.
- 3) If no clubs in your area have a workshop, find another member who has a setup and ask to be taught. Trust me these “old guys” love teaching!

4) Consider getting a small setup for you home so you can make cabs when YOU want.

My Workspace 'cause it ain't a studio!

by LAURIE JANE KERN *on* APRIL 6, 2009 ·

When we bought our house, I got the bonus room! It a huge 16' by 16' space over the garage. It cost a bit more money but I had a sub-floor laid and vinyl floor laid. What I found interesting was that the carpet was considered "standard" - I guess the foam padding means they can leave the floor as rough and uneven as they want.

Why did I get the bonus room? I needed an office and a place for my sewing. So in one corner is the desk, book shelves and my computers (I am currently a software engineer, but that's another post). In the opposite corner is my sewing table, dress dummy, ironing board, and cutting table, the small closet has all the fabric. I have been sewing clothing, quilts, pillows, purses, bags, bathrobes, etc for over 30 years. The e-Man got an office, but his hobbies did not require as much room as mine.

Here is my sewing area.



And the vinyl flooring. Trust me when you sew you don't want carpet. First there is getting all the thread and sewing shmutz cleaned up. Then there are the dropped pins or the dropped dish of pins!

So when you then start getting into making silver jewelry where do you set up your workspace. We do not have a basement. IF we did, that would be where I would have put a sewing "studio".

Out in the garage? - Even though this is California we are inland and it is semi-desert. That means it is 100+ during the summer and 56-60 during the winter. The perfect temperature, about 70, happens from late March through the end of April and again from October through early December. Though there are days it can swing in either direction, at any time during these period.

Then there is the issue of having a day job (that darn software engineering thing again). Working in the garage at night is rather lonely. That is when I decided to "convert" the sewing area into Silver Workshop.

As you will see this affords me the most space, keeps me inside (A/C in the summer, Heat in the winter) and I can easily break it down to do a few weeks of sewing too.

I take out the sewing machine, and raise the platform it sits on, so the “hole” is closed. This allows me to sit at the table easier. I then clear the table and lay down two layers of freezer paper, waxy side down. This I tape down with painter’s tape. I also lay down two large sheets of plain paper so I can change them easily, plus the paper gives me a place to jot down quick notes. I leave the two natural light lamps to give me plenty of light.

I then place down a large floor tile, that was leftover from the house being built. On this tile I do my soldering. The tile protects the table from getting burned. I use the ironing board to hold my dremel tool for cutting coils (inside a large zip bag to collect the silver dust)

Then around me I place my bench block and hammers. Layout the pliers. Attach the coil winder to the far left side so not to walk into it and rip my clothing (or me!). I place my pickel pot on the floor, by a plug and out of the way of foot traffic.

Here are the pictures of my workshop

The tool box which can hold almost everything but the tile and table!



The table, cleared of sewing, with the paper laid down and taped.



The soldering station with tile, water, torch. Vice and dremel tools to the left

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Looking across the table from the left, coil winder in the front



Bench Block and Hammers to my right



Taking more care

by LAURIE JANE KERN *on* APRIL 11, 2009 ·

A few weeks ago I started three silver pendants. Why three? I have no idea but it certainly bit me in the butt.

I have always been a project “singleton”. That in the sewing world means “one project at one time” and it even implies that you don’t buy fabric or patterns en-mass with the decision to put it on the list. The list just gets bigger and bigger and you never seem to get to that project as a new purchase takes priority.

Thus doing THREE projects at once was a bit daring for me and I guess I will not do that for a while.

Any-who-ha, after I finished the silver mounts, they were put away, because I had promised to do some sewing for a friend. During this sewing time, the mounts were put into the vibratory tumbler and were made nice and sparkly.

A week or so ago, I set up the “workshop” again. I then pulled the cabs and silver out of the storage box and got down to setting the stones. On one, the bezel had shifted (take that to mean, I bent it out of shape) during soldering and now the cab would not fit. Back to the flat lap to correct that issue. I then ground it a bit too small and now have a nice dimple in the bezel.

For the second cab, I discovered that part of the bezel was not even soldered! Back to the torch, pickle and vibra-ora-tory-ium for that one!

The third fit, thank goodness.

{ 2 comments... }

Michael Johnson 04.13.09 at 7:33 am

Your link goes to somewhere inside your wordpress account. :o)

I like to have several projects going at once too. That way I have something to do while part of one is in the acid etching, or in the pickle.

Be careful lapping a stone to fit. Try to leave room to bring down the size further with the small grits. I cut my stones to fit 90% of the time; metal first, and then cut to fit. But, you have to be aware of how much the laps will take off and how soft the stone is that you are working with. :o)

Anne Bellissimo 04.14.09 at 3:46 am

Another aspiring silversmith here...It sounds as if 3 was a pretty good number: One worked. Yay!

Taking Care - Again

by LAURIE JANE KERN on APRIL 13, 2009 ·

Yup, I did it again....

After my last post, I pulled out a rhodochrosite cab I made a few weeks ago. Then, after doodling a few ideas for a shape, I started to work on a pendant.

I cut the 22g sheet fine, then refined the shape by filing a bit.

I made the bezel no problem.

Tested the stones fit - perfect!

I soldered the bezel to the sheet - placement a bit off on one side but I can file down the sheet on the other to make it a bit more even.

Then I get the dental floss, so I can test the fit of the stone. I laid the floss, across the bezel and in went the stone, a bit tight but it won't require any major mods to the bezel or stone.

Then, when lifting the floss to get the stone out of the bezel....

POP and the cab went flying out of the bezel

... the cab, bounced once on the workbench

.....and bounced once on the floor

.....and (you can see where this is going...) it broke in two - at a 30 degree angle from the top surface of the cab to the back.

Take a deep breath. This can be fixed, where is the epoxy?

BTW, this is the second "pink" stone that has broken on me.

NOTE TO SELF: NO MORE PINK AGATES

So while the epoxy cured, I moved on to the baile (it is bale, bail or baile)

I made this out of wire doing a few winds on the coil winder. Got it all soldered, turned it around and - it was off center.

So I had to remove the bale, clean it up and the back of the pendant and solder a second time. It is now in the vibra-or-torium and with luck I will set the stone tomorrow.

So after this weighing on my mind ALL DAY TODAY, I had another bonk on the head.

From a old jewelry book I picked up, and was reading during lunch, I give you the following (modified) random quotes:

” Don’t rush!”; “Practice!, you might think you are ready to move to the next project, but with out practice your skills will be lacking”; “Check your work, make sure the solder has flowed where you expect”

So, it is back to basics and maybe I do try a few of the practice projects from that book!

{ **2** comments... }

Michael Johnson 04.14.09 at 5:02 am

It sounds like you are doing well. The setbacks will get less as you do this over and over. Rhodochrosite can be a bear. I break these fairly often while cabbng. It’s not my favorite stone, but it is one that people like. When I use it the work sells fast. So, I’m not ready to scratch it off of my list of stones yet. But, any stone can break. I carved my first fire agate a few weeks ago, getting perfect colorations

of greens and reds, within microscopic layers. I got the final polish on it, handed it to my daughter to go wash it up, and she tripped over the dog, sending the cab smashing into the ground in pieces. Yep, it happens to us all :o)

But, believe me, you will look back on these trifles, and wonder why you had so much trouble. It's actually great that you are blogging these days, so that you'll have a record of sorts.

judy hoch 04.22.09 at 8:52 am

Laurie - Rhodochrosite is not an agate. It is a different material, much softer. There are many pink stones that are far easier to handle than rhodochrosite - rhodonite, thulite, pink common opal, pink grossular garnet - massive. And of course some true agates. Find something harder - or make your bezel a bit bigger.
Judy

History - Part Two : Wire Wrap

by LAURIE JANE KERN on APRIL 15, 2009 ·

As I explained in Part One ([read it here](#)) Obi-Wan-Don taught me how to cut, grind, and polish cabs. I had become a cab producing fool, as I now had all of these cabs and nothing to do with them and looking at them can only get you so far.

Obi-Wan's wife Bonnie is an expert wire wrap artist and was going to be teaching a class down at the Fallbrook Club, so of course I signed up (it was October of 2008). I purchased a basic pliers set and in the class Bonnie had the other items we would need.

I made one wire wrap pendant. Go ahead and laugh!

I like the stone but the curly-q's are a bit much. I think I will keep this one FOREVER just to show how far I have come.

I also purchased some extra wire so I could make a few more. I then made these:













I have now made over 30 wire wrap pendants, I have sold 3 pendants, given 3 pendants as presents, and for my personal collection I have 5 which I wear.

The remaining I am hoping to sell (eventually) at the club's October show.

Next I will tell you how I had to make chains so I can have the pendants to hang on.

See, first cabs, then making pendants, then chains... Personally I think it was a plan of Obi-Wan-Don to take me to the Silver Side.

{ 1 comment... }

Delpfine Welch 04.17.09 at 7:05 pm

Next step, silversmithing! Nice cabs.

Delpfine

Life interferes with art (mine)

by LAURIE JANE KERN on APRIL 24, 2009 ·

It's been a crazy week.

Don't you just hate it when your day job interferes with you hobbies! That's not to say that I don't like my job. I have always said that if you are not enjoying what you are doing then find either a new job or a new career. I am in my second career (Software Engineer) and working towards my third (silver smith).

But at the day job; we have been pushing to get a new software and database released to production - TODAY. To say it has been a crazy month would be an understatement. I was responsible for refactoring a package of database stored procedures. The original code was like angel hair pasta - you got lost just trying to figure out what it was doing and the person(s) who wrote it originally have since left the project.

My job was to clean it up and hopefully it would also run faster, remember this was not to be a major re-write, just some clean up. I started by going through it all on my local machine and asked a lot of questions to the db guru's about some of the changes I knew were needed but did not know the syntax.

I was doing incremental tests and it all seemed ok until we started doing final testing Wednesday. The bottom line was, that after 4 weeks of work, it was decided to roll back all of the code changes I had made. I finally had to throw in the towel this morning and admit defeat! The bottom line was that making these changes had caused many things to stop working and *that's NOT A GOOD THING.*

No errors were being thrown by the code, it's just that no data was being sent back to the application from the database. I spent most of yesterday looking, but we could not pinpoint where it all was going wrong. This is when I went to the project lead and admitted I had to roll it back - or we would not make tonight's release. The code has been rolled back, compiled and pushed to the testing machines and it works. It's still slow but it works.

WHEW!

Thank goodness, I can come home and just work with some silver wire and if it gets messed up, I can put it in the scrap jar.

Toolboxes: Hidden Treasures and Long Lost Memories

by LAURIE JANE KERN on APRIL 27, 2009 ·

My father was a self made engineer.

In High School, he was in the metal/machine shop courses; it was the '40's and there was no money for college. Right out of High School he joined the Navy as WWII was in full swing, and became a machinist's mate. After the war he then got a job for the N.Y. transit authority repairing turnstiles for the subway.

After that, he worked as tech at the first company in the USA to produce printed circuit boards and while he was there, he was awarded several patents. In the 60's he was a supervisor and manufacturing engineering lead at another company where eventually he became the general manager.

He was a natural born engineer, and I inherited his genes.

One day, he was in the garage putting a transmission in a car he was building. I should say he was trying to put it in, as he was having problems aligning it. I came over and something like - "Lift that end, twist it to the right, insert it, twist it back to left and it should slide in." I was told to go away, go inside and didn't I have some homework to do? A while later he came in, and told my mom that I had been correct, having never seen a transmission, let alone put one in a car, before. Soon after that, I was going to the factory he ran, and I was telling him how to improve the automated equipment.

My parents did everything in their power to make sure my sister and I could go to college. I went to Case Institute of Technology at Case Western Reserve University and got my B.S. in Biomedical Engineering. I also earned a M.S. in Manufacturing Management.

Several years after I graduated, I was home and my father asked me for some help with an “engineering” problem he was having. I sat in his office, while he went to get some coffee, and I made some phone calls and got him the answers he needed. Little did I know that he was outside his office door, listening to me on the phone and afterward he then went to my mom, and said “she’s really good!” My father never told me this; it was my mom did, years later.

See dad, I did inherit your genes and I too am a natural engineer - I can look at things and just see how they go together.

My father passed away over 22 years ago and I took his machinist tool chest out of the basement a few years later. It was boxed up and shipped to my house. It has been sitting in my garage all this time. Last weekend, I finally decided to open that tool chest. First I thought that the tool chest would be a great place to store the tools I have recently acquired for my silver work. I also knew that that in the tool chest were many items I could use as well.

It took 3 days but I did empty it and get it all cleaned up. Isn’t amazing how such little items, when looked at can bring back memories you had not thought about for decades.

I found compasses, dividers, calipers, a micrometer, levels, a swage block, micro files, as well as taps and dies. Inside was also the tiny ball-peen hammer I played

with in the basement, there was also the leather mallet and the dog's collar and tags. I also found one of my report cards from elementary school. In the tool box, there was also a part of my father's Navy service record with the ribbons he was awarded, and a [tapa cloth](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tapa_cloth) (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tapa_cloth) from when he was stationed in [New Caledonia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Caledonia) (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Caledonia)

These tools have now been cleaned and are sitting in the toolbox once again, along side my new hammers, pliers, wire cutters, files, bench block and more.

See dad, unfortunately I inherited more than your genes, but I can use your tools too!

{ **3** comments... read them below or [add one](#) }

Lynn White 04.30.09 at 7:33 pm

Your story made me think of my dad, who passed away 5 years ago. My Dad could fix anything and build anything from scratch. He was a bricklayer by trade. He was obsessed with building and flying RC model airplanes. I used to sit in his workshop with him and watch him build stuff quite frequently when I was a kid. I tried my hand at building model airplanes, but lacked interest and the patience. But I did fly them with my Dad until I got into high school and got distracted by other activities.

A few years ago, I became interested in jewelry making. Because of that, I acquired a tool fetish. I learned to make things with my hands just like my Dad always did. He never got to find that out, and I feel bad about that. I'm sure he would have been proud of my jewelry making skills and the jewelry items I have made.

Anyway, while I was in school learning jewelry making I decided to look around the tools in my Dad's workshop to see if there was anything I could use for my jewelry. I found some files, a nice heavy vise, a wire bender and a few other things. I remember using these tools while helping my Dad as a kid. I guess I shouldn't be surprised to discover that I am using them again 35-40 years later. I was always a chip off of Dad's block. I miss him.

Lynn White 04.30.09 at 7:38 pm

By the way, what did you use to clean up the old tools?

Jane Walker 04.30.09 at 9:21 pm

How I envy you for the ability to look at things and just see how they go together! I bet you can 'see' how to put things together when you're designing a new piece in your head or on paper ...

c'n I have some of your genes, please, pretty please?

History Part Three: Silver Chains

by LAURIE JANE KERN on APRIL 30, 2009 ·

[Part One was about Rocks making cabs](#)

[Part Two was about learning to wire wrap](#)

So now, in Part Three I will tell you about my discovery of chains and my start of working in Silver

Again it was late 2008 and I had made a few wire wrap pendants and I went shopping for a chain. I have to admit that I only looked in a few local jewelry (i.e. mall) stores. I was not finding what I wanted but I eventually found a chain that would do. At this moment I was not even thinking of going down the path I am currently following.

My husband and I then went to the annual San Diego “Gem Diego”. It was there that I saw a display of chains. Of course there was some chain maille items but there were other chains as well. And the person who had done the display was giving a demo of chain maille. I now know that it was Paul Kloppenborg.

I fell in love! My husband, said “go for it”

[Side Note 1: I have been into swords and armour from Japan and the Medieval period for a long time. I was a rather good fencer as well in my younger days.]

I did know that the Palomar Club, also had some silver classes. I checked into it and found that they would be starting class again after the first of the year, as it was now the holiday season. So while I waited I went online and ordered some pre-cut links and started to learn some basic chain maille weaves.

Fast forward through Turkey Day, Hanukah, Christmas, Kwanzaa, and New Years....and any other celebration I might have missed

In mid-January, the first silver class of the new year was announced. It was a basic class to learn soldering and we would make a simple bracelet with little wire hearts made from rings, with other circular rings connecting them. I was there!

[Side Note 2: I spent two summers working as a welder but that was almost 30 years ago so I was a bit rusty with my torch skills, but it is like a bicycle, you never really forget]

Here is a picture of that bracelet.



I have now made and either given them as presents or sold 5. I have taken the idea and made earrings and I have made a larger necklace/chain.



I am currently working my way through the book “Making Silver Chains”... by Glen F. Waszek.

{ 1 comment... }

heather skowood 05.02.09 at 6:52 am

Sweet heart bracelet!

Silver Mounted Cab's

by LAURIE JANE KERN *on* MAY 2, 2009 ·

I have been trying to finish a few projects so here is another flurry of pictures

This is my first silver mounted cab. There was a class down at the Palomar club in March, which ran for 4 weeks. We started off with the basics: Make a bezel, pickling, saw/cut the backing, soldering down the bezel to the back, filing to shape, adding a bale, mounting the stone and of course polishing.

I don't really know what type of agate/jasper this is but it was very hard to cut but despite that, it is now one of my favorites. I have a few extra pieces left, from the same slab so I can't decide to sell the cabs or maybe make a few more pendants and then sell them on.



Because, I made my first pendant in 2 weeks, I had more than enough time to make this one next. The cab is Verisite that I bought at the San Diego show and cabbed.



Oh - and I made the chain tooo! I finished this one at home over the weekend.

Now, my real goal was to mount a cab that finished when I bought it. It was polished on all sides and had a flat top. I wanted to put the bezel on the top, and have the cab, hang down below it. I traced the outer diameter of the flat top, made the bezel, cut the plate to just hang a bit over the bezel like a funny “top hat”. Then I put a ring on the top so I could hang it from a chain.

I call this one “Mezzalluna”. It is on a fetter and link chain that I made as well.



{ **2** comments... }

Lynn Vernon 05.04.09 at 8:36 am

OUTSTANDING! You have a great eye and your work on chains is amazing. You should be very proud of yourself.

M'lou 05.14.09 at 10:18 am

Nice work! I really like the lunar one.

Here is a hint on English: drop the ‘ on your word “Cab’s”. To make a plural, no apostrophe is necessary. Apostrophes are kind of a hobby for me, since I have one

in my name!

- M'lou

Working on the Chain Gang

by LAURIE JANE KERN on MAY 9, 2009 ·

I have been working my way through Making Silver Chains: simple techniques, beautiful designs by Glen Waszek, and as I made each chain my soldering has gotten better: less messy (too much solder, bumps, voids, small gaps) and I am not soldering 2 or more links together or having to re-solder a link; and the time it takes to make a chain is shorter not that one should rush it but all these little issues add up.

One of the first big ticket tools I bough soon after I started this journey was a Koil Cutter from Dave Arnes. This is one of the best investments I have made so far. If you still hand saw your links from coils you really have to get one of these set ups. I also bought the hand winder with the basic mandrel set. I have then supplemented the mandrels which are in .5 mm increments with bamboo knitting needles – double pointed needles to be exact. Why? A) Knitting needles can be found in .25mm increments. B) Bamboo allows for easy cutting and modification C) Double pointed (which are for socks) are the perfect length for winding coils on!

As I was saying....The instructions from the chain book are very easy to understand and the chains progress from easy to harder and more complex. The one problem I have is that the wire size for each project is listed as gauge size (ie 20g) but the physical size (in mm) is not the true gauge size, in either gauge system. The wire being used for the chains is an exact metric size. This difference does not affect some of the simpler chains but when you get to the more complex chains (loop-in-loop, idiots delight) it does matter. To resolve this problem, I

have taken the wire size and the winding mandrel size – both of which are in millimeters, from the book and calculated the actual aspect ratio of the link. I then use this aspect ratio to see if the true wire gauge and mandrel size should be adjusted. The advantage of calculating the aspect ratio fore each chain also makes it easier when I want to change wire gauge and still keep the proportions of the chain. [The programmer in me has built spread sheet so I convert from Aspect Ratio to Wire/Mandrel sizes by just a few key strokes!]

So what chains have I done?

Here they are in order, from left to right: Basic Trace Chain; Fetter and Link; Elongated Trace Chain; Loop-in Loop and Wiggly - though I call it rosette. (you will see some of these in the pictures of my pendants)





I am skipping the curb chains cause I just don't like the look of them.

My next chain (s) will be the "Fancy" chapter. After that I hope to move onto the Classical Loop in Loop book.

{ 3 comments... read them below or [add one](#) }

Anne Bellissimo 05.11.09 at 4:28 am

What a good idea! Thanks for posting with the photos. I am a novice, but have done quite a bit of work with metal clay which leaves a lot of work that needs beads or chain to actually be worn. So—I guess I'll be figuring aspect ratios soon. Thanks for the tip and the book title. Your work looks good—I crank up my new Little Torch this week...Anne

Michael Johnson 05.11.09 at 10:24 am

Great work!!!

It sounds like you are having fun while you learn :o)

shelbyvision 05.12.09 at 5:31 am

This brings back memories. My first job in the jewelry trade was making chain. It was about 1974, and it was sweat-shop conditions, just three people making gold chain, until gold prices shot up, then we switched to mostly silver. It was the most tedious work imaginable, and the place wasn't air conditioned, so it would be over 100F in there in the summer. The wire was wound on special elliptical mandrels on a lathe. Before winding, the mandrel was wrapped with paper, not just any paper, but the brown paper from the sleeves that came on National Geographic Magazines (it was just the right thickness). After the wire was wrapped on the mandrel, the whole unit was heated with a torch, which annealed the wire and burned the paper away, so the coil would slip off easily. The coil was then sawed by hand with a jeweler's saw at the bench pin, then the links were assembled together and closed with pliers. Then the most difficult part (and the part I thought I would never be able to master, although I did) was taking a tiny square of sheet solder with needle-nosed pliers and inserting it into the joint of the link, one in each link, for chains that were often several feet long. After every link had its solder inserted, the soldering was done, one link at a time. This was done with the torch attached upright to the bench pin with rubber bands, so the link being soldered could be held in the flame for complete control. After soldering, the chains were pickled, then tumbled with steel shot, then buffed. After buffing, they were put into a pan of detergent and ammonia on a hotplate, so the shop always reeked of ammonia. We were so used to it we didn't notice it, but it was really funny when someone new to the place came in there. Ah, what memories! The shop was in Oreland, PA, outside of Philadelphia, and the owner's name was Walter Haslam. I think he was in his forties when I worked there, so he might still be alive, maybe someone out there knows.

Ring-A-Ding (or part 1 of learning to make a ring)

by LAURIE JANE KERN on MAY 12, 2009 ·

Last week, I started a 3 session class at the Palomar Gem and Mineral and Gem Club <http://palomargem.legendearth.com/>. This class is focused on making a ring using a bezel set cab and double half round wire for the shank. In this class we are not placing the cab and silver setting on top of the shank, but working it into the shank.

In the first class most of us completed our bezel and soldering it to the base plate (if there is another name for this, I don't know what it is, sorry). The next step was to determine our ring size and cut the length for the shank. The actual length of the shank that is to be used is determined by taking the circumference of the ring size needed plus the thickness of the wire gauge then from this length you have to subtract the "length" or actual width of the silver setting for the cab as the setting becomes part of the shank.

But wait, we don't know what the setting width will be yet. Why? - Well we have soldered the bezel to the backing but we have not trimmed the backing to be flush with the bezel and that is because we are adding some decoration. I am putting some silver balls and twisted wire/rope around the outside of my bezel. Once that is done, I can cut away the excess silver.

Below is a picture of the staged work. Yes, the over achiever in me is making two rings at once.

So this Thursday I shall be soldering down the rope, balls and cutting away the extra silver around the bezel. More pictures later in the week.



{ 1 comment... }

Mike 05.26.10 at 10:01 am

Good to connect with a person who is also learning the basics of silversmithing... although based on the pics in your blog, us hackers can learn a lot from your work. Appreciate your flair for design - 'bling to the rings'.

Picked up some of the rudiments of the craft down in AZ last winter and am currently working out of a make-shift shop at home ... (courtesy of internet shopping). Although we continually need to work on the basics - it's the 'ideas' that drive the projects. Good stuff Laurie Jane.

Cheers, Mike

Ring-a-Ding-Ding (part 2)

by LAURIE JANE KERN on MAY 17, 2009 ·

Thursday night was the second part of the ring class.

I was able to finish the first one which has the jade cab.

It is now proudly parked on my right hand.



I hope to finish off the Sugalite this week, as I just took the ring out of the pickle pot - The balls and twisted wire are now soldered around the bezel. The second ring is supposed to be for Eliza of Scotland though I am liking the mount and the Sugalite sooo much she might not get it!

Ring-A-Ding-Ding-DING (part 3)

by LAURIE JANE KERN on MAY 23, 2009 · [o COMMENTS](#)

After I took the mount out of the pickle pot, I then soldered on the shank, back into the pickle pot it went and then I put it in the vibra-ora-torium, before I set the stone to make it really sparkle.



On Tuesday evening, I was ready to mount the stone. And then... we noticed I had missed soldering down one of the arms on the shank. D!@*n !!!!! Back into my office and I had it soldered in less than 5 minutes but it was then time for another round of pickle and tumbling

It is now, 9:30 on Saturday morning, and not only has the stone been mounted, it has been photographed and sent off to Elisa who emailed back a big OOOHHHHHH! I think she likes it.

So here it is, ALL DONE



Misc. Musings

by LAURIE JANE KERN *on* MAY 25, 2009 ·

I think I have made great progress in my silver work.

I finished the second ring and in between the Thursday classes, I was playing with Viking Knit. These hands hate to be idle!

I had found some instructions for VK on-line and thought I would give it a try. I made two bracelet: one that was just plain VK with 24 g sterling silver wire, and the second was made with the same wire but I worked some small garnet beads into the knit. I took both down to class to show Diane, who was leading the class and she ask me [ME!!] to teach a class in VK. WOW, and several of the ladies said they wanted to learn it too.

OMG, I feel so YIPEEEEEEE, people like my work and want to learn from me [and I have only been at this for 4 months!] This still has to be all be sorted out and maybe I will do it in the fall as I have a very busy summer.

And why will my summer will be busy?

Anything used for a long time occasionally needs repair. Your car probably gets regular maintenance but every once in a while, it just breaks and you get it fixed, your house sometimes needs some repairs and even jewelry also has to get fixed, it can just wear out. As can we!

Well, I have to go for some minor repairs too. It's not critical or serious and this is not frivolous either. It seems that sometime in the past year I have torn my right rotator cuff. (That's the tendon and ball and socket in shoulder). I also have a bone spur which has compounded the problem. Being left handed, this is a strange situation as it is normally torn in the dominant arm; I have not been throwing 100 mph baseballs either.

There are so many things I can't do or have had to stop doing. I can't do any cab cutting; long hours at the computer gives me hours of pain; putting on T-shirts is hard. Basically any movement that raises my hand above the shoulder causes and OW! Thankfully, soldering does not cause pain and my husband has been helping me wind coils so I could continue to make some chains.

This Wednesday is the day I am getting fixed. Then a week in a sling, then a week of limited use and by mid-June I will be into the physical therapy. And just about this time the Del Mar (San Diego) fair will start.

I am a member of the Volunteers for Minerals and we have a booth at the Del Mar fair in the Gem & Mineral building. I am working the booth every Saturday, all day, while the fair is open. (Yes, these days I will also be in a sling to make sure I don't lift anything too heavy) IF you come to the fair on a Saturday, please come by and say hello as I would love to meet some of you.

I love working the fair and talking to the little kids who LOVE LOVE LOVE rocks, minerals, fossils, and any sparkly and whose parents just don't get it. I hear things like "Oh no, not another rock!" or "Why do you want that? It's not even pretty". I then make an effort to talk about science and encourage their kids as if they are good at it maybe - just maybe, they might get a scholarship for college OR (gosh) a great career and a great salary. Amazingly, that's when I see the light go on! Somewhere in there, I try to drop that I am an engineer, have two degrees and make more money than my husband. This is really important if the child, who wants the mineral and is a young girl. That is really an impact!

I know I am taking a bit of a left turn at this point and it does not have much to do with metal smithing or jewelry **BUT** I am very saddened by the state of education here in California and many parents who do not take an interest in their child's education let alone encourage other interests. If a kid wants to collect rocks, then let them! If they want to make jewelry versus them playing soccer well, then let them, as one day they might have a career they enjoy and not just a job they hate.

I am done now ;=) Thanks!

How would you rate your skill level?

by LAURIE JANE KERN on MAY 30, 2009 · [0 COMMENTS](#)

I have been on my forced hiatus, allowing my shoulder to heal. I have also been reading the on-going discussion about how people classify themselves, in [Identity Crisis](#) here in the forums. But how would you rate your skills? How would others rate your skills? [For background on this post, I suggest you read this entry on [The Dreyfus Model of Skills Acquisition](#).

At the day job, we were talking about interviews and how when asked people rate their skill based upon their last job. The lead architect on the project proceeded to talk about the Dreyfus Model and sent us this link above. I read the entry and there are other similar blog posts and links as well, and then I thought about how I learn and it made me wonder.....

How do other members of Ganoksin project (you in the plural) rate themselves in their skill level?

Here is how I would rate myself?

Sewing: Proficient moving to Expert. I can sew amazing things, I can take an idea and redo it but IMHO, to be an expert you are designing your own clothing line.

Cab Making: Advanced Beginner. I know how to make them but there are wayyyyy to many questions that I have about the various aspects of it. Don't you?

Silversmith: Novice/Beginner. Again there are sooo many things to learn. I do agree that we all have/want a speciality, and you can be a Master in one and a Novice in another. But since I have only been at this since January I would say I am novice at all of it!!

I could go on and on about my other interests: Cooking, Knitting, Tap Dancing. Then there is the day job/professional aspect, which is a whole 'nother book.

SO WHERE DO YOU PLACE YOUR SELF?

She's baaaaacccccckkkkkk

by LAURIE JANE KERN on JUNE 10, 2009 ·

.... well almost

It has been two weeks since my shoulder surgery. I only had minor tear in the rotator cuff but a rather large bone spur which the doc removed. The bone really hurts. I can't do any soldering at the moment, since lifting my arm is rather painful.

My brain is buzzing with ideas but my arm just won't cooperate.

So what's a girl to do?

.....Sit in a chair and document all the work I have done over the past few months!

Right before the surgery, I did anticipate this and I took lots of pictures. These are now taped to a worksheet where I can write out instructions for making the piece in question. Surgery was done on my right arm but I am left handed!

I am writing out gauges, inches and weight of silver used, and the steps to make the item AND in some cases, when I wrote it down, how long it took to make the items.

I start physical therapy this week so it will be back to the saw and torch soon!

Documenting (My) Work

by LAURIE JANE KERN on JUNE 12, 2009 ·

I have made some great progress documenting my work, during this down time.

I completed taking pictures and printing 2 copies of each.

One will be for a photo album I can show people. The second is for a worksheet I have designed, so I can write up the “making” process. This is more for many of the chains I am making - necklaces, bracelets, earrings, but also for the pendants in case someone wants a similar item.

I have been keeping notes in a design book, but on this worksheet I am writing it all down in one place: the gauge of the silver wire or sheet; the size of the mandrel if I have wound coils; tracings of the stones I used for the sketches. I also write down the weight of the finished piece, before I set the stone, if there is one; and of course the time it takes to make it and lastly, the cost of the stone if there is one! All of this helps in pricing a finished piece.

For the photo album, I have found a nice black glossy album, that has 2 slots per side of the page. I can use the top slot for the photo of the piece. The bottom slot will hold a card with the Name/Description of the piece. If the item is a chain, I will also list if it can be a necklace, bracelet and/or earrings. If the piece has a stone, I list the stone type and some minor information about that type of stone.

I also bought a second album, so when I sell a one-off piece I can move the picture, from the main album, over to this one. I can then mark it as a “private” piece. I have all ready put in this album, all of the pieces I have made for my self and those I have given to Janda, The Fair Maiden of Tran and Elisa of Scotland. ;=))

Speaking of My work, here is a piece I finished a few weeks ago and never posted.

This is a quartz cab with tourmaline needle inclusions, I made a stepped bezel to keep the back open thus letting the light in. I also traced the stone and mirrored it in the bale.



{ 1 comment... }

Hans Meevis 06.13.09 at 8:31 am

You are definitely on the right track. Documenting your work is super important. I have lost years and years of work because I did not photograph it. Major mistake in my career.

Bench Tips #1 - Using Tools and Equipment From Household Items

by LAURIE JANE KERN on JUNE 17, 2009 ·

Since there is a long discussion going on about bench tips, I thought I would add to the mix with what I have done, since I am a newbie.

I think the engineer in me is finding another outlet - converting household items for use as tools and equipment when I find I don't have said item. In many of these instances I either need it NOW or I am uncertain about if I will need it long term and don't want to spend that much money yet.

For example I needed a coil winding mandrel that was about 4.25 mm so the aspect ratio for a chain would be spot on. Some books suggest wrapping paper around a 4 mm mandrel until you get close. My husband suggested I use the end of a drill bit as this was closer to the correct diameter but the coils would be short and I would have to make quite a few of them. I then decided to raid my knitting needle stash! In my prior post "Working on the Chain Gang" I mentioned this briefly.

Here is how I converted a knitting needle to a coil winding mandrel I took the bamboo double pointed needle, cut one point off and then used my saw to cut a groove in the flat end big enough to grab the wire so I could coil wind on it. So far I have supplemented the mandrels that come with the Koil Cutter with about 4 different sizes and oh, by the way dpn's (double pointed needles) usually come 5 to the set. You can usually pick these up at your local knitting store (support another small business) or at a large box craft store (these shall remain nameless).

What else I have found to be useful from household items?

Read my next post...soon

Bench Tips #2 - Creating Tools and Equipment from Household Items

by LAURIE JANE KERN on JUNE 23, 2009 ·

This post, and the posts yet to come are what I have converted as a result of making jump rings en-mass.

But before that, a quick update on the shoulder. Ouch!, the PT is now in the third week and with each session I can raise and move my arm more BUT boy does it hurt. I am also very tired so not much silver work yet. I can solder about 3 jump rings and then I have to stop.

And now for the rest of this post....

Using Liquid Soap as a lubricant:

I use the pump of the container to dispensing a thin line of the soap in the groove where the blade meets the coil. All coil cutters need a lubricant as this prevents the saw from binding with the coil and to also dissipate the heat generated during the cutting.

Why do you think you use bee's wax when using a hand saw. But when using a hand saw, you want the lube to stick to the saw blade and not drip.

When using a coil cutter, the dripping is not as much of an issue. Be warned that the soap will foam a bit which is result of the spinning blade also introducing some air into the mix BUT the soap does trap the silver dust and helps to keep it from flying everywhere as well. Afterwards the soap washes away easily so clean up is faster.

I also use the soap for drawing chains, especially the loop-in-loop and Viking knit, through a sizing draw plate. I use a delrin plate, again from Dave Arnes but

this would work in the hard wood draw plate as well. I have not tried this (yet) for pulling wire.

Personally In either case, I like the cucumber fragrance as it is not over powering as some of the florals.

Bench Tips #3 Creating Tools and Equipment From Household Items

by LAURIE JANE KERN on JUNE 30, 2009 ·

Before we move to the topic, first another update on the arm.

It has now been 3+ weeks since the surgery and PT is progressing well. I am still having stretching done and my range of motion is wayyy better. I am now using a counter weight, that I pull down with my 'other' arm, to raise (not lift as that would require using the shoulder muscles) the arm. When doing this I can get my right hand over my head! As for the overall range of motion, I can lift my hand, using my shoulder muscles, to pull up my pants! [Hey after three weeks of not being able to do this, it is a big accomplishment!] I can also get my hand just slightly behind my back, at hip level. In another week I will [hopefully] start some weight training to get the strength back.

AND NOW, The Topic...Using a Large (I mean BIG) Zip Lock Bag for a dust hood

When using a ring coil cutter, it is suggested that you cut the coils in a hood of some type, to collect the silver dust and to keep the dust from flying everywhere - including into your lungs.

In lieu of a hood, I use a rather **large** zip lock bag. It is big enough that I can get the cutting jig, dremel tool with blade and both my hands in it quite easily. After several uses I then use warm soapy (gee I wonder where the soap comes from.. see prior post about soap as a lubricant) water to rinse all the dust down to the bottom. Then I roll back the opening and let the bag dry out so I can reclaim the dust.

That's it - simple, easy and very inexpensive.

Bench Tips #4 Creating Tools and Equipment From Household Items

by LAURIE JANE KERN on JULY 9, 2009 ·

Coffee Filters for 'dust' collection.

Before I explain what I use these for, I should tell you that I use the flat bottomed fluted (Mr. Coffee) type of coffee filter as these can also be spread out flat. Now, on to the why!

When Sawing:

A real jewelers work bench has the leather drape which is used to collect all sorts of schmutz from silver dust, fillings, to dropped parts. I don't have one of these but when I saw, the bench pin is clamped to the front edge of my table. This means that when I saw the dust will fall on the floor and get all over the place and tracked around the house. I remedied this by placing the pin over the 3 rows of drawers that I have in the table. I then pull out a drawer that is midway down, on top of the drawer I place a few sheets of paper as this stops the dust from falling into the drawer, and on top of that, I put the flattened coffee filter. The filter usually catches most of the silver dust and what it misses is caught by the paper. When I am done sawing, I can lift the filter and paper off, I then tap the dust from

the paper into the filter and all of this is put into the silver dust jar for recycling. The filter can then be set aside for the next time.

When Filing:

Again this is when a drape would be handy, instead I place the flattened filter on the table top and do all of my hand filing over the filter to catch the removed material. I also clean the file with a brass brush on the filter before I put my files away. The filter is once again folded in half and dust slides down the fold into the collection jar.

When Cutting Coils:

Earlier I mentioned using liquid soap as the lube for cutting coils and how the soap also traps the dust. This mix, when you are done cutting the coils, is now over not only the cutting fixture but the coils as well. From inside the bag I use as a dust hood, I place the cut rings in a (all together now) flattened filter. I place this in the bottom of the bathroom sink, but first I close the drain most of the way. I then turn the water on to a slow trickle which I guide over the coils with my hands. At a slow trickle, the water will pool in the filter but the water will also slowly drain through the filter. As the rings get rinsed I transfer them to a clean towel and let all the silver dust collect in the bottom of the filter. When I am done, I once again fold the filter in half and place it on the clean towel as well. Taking the towel, I can then move back into my workshop area and place the now dried rings in a holding container for future use. The folded filter stays on the towel overnight to dry and from there I can then tap the silver dust into the dust holding container.

A Home Study Course In Jewelry Making

by LAURIE JANE KERN on JULY 12, 2009 ·

It has now been 6 months since I caught the silver bug. During this time, I have learned to solder, saw, roll, and texture silver. I have also been making stones set in silver for pendants, bracelets and chains.

So what's next....

Take classes at the Revere School in San Fran. [I wish!]

Actually I am saving to take some classes at the Revere school, but until then, I went looking for a way to teach myself some more technique and improve my skills. So my search led me to several online book stores, jewelry suppliers and many other websites to read reviews. [This is what I have been doing while I wait for my shoulder to heal]

I found quite a few books that detail the skills but I was also looking for a book that would give me some projects where I could use these new skills. Once I found several books, I asked my local bookstore if they could get copies - I actually want to look at the books before I purchase them. They said there was no obligation to purchase any of them, and so they did order 4 books for me.

A few weeks later the books came in and I must have spent 2 hours going through all of them. I then bought 2 of the book:

The Complete Jewelry Making Course by Jinks McGrath

Jewelry Making: Tips and Tricks of the Trade by Stephen O'Keeffe

Since I am now doing flexibility and strengthening in PT, and I can do limited silver work, I am starting with the book by Stephen O’Keeffe and I hope to work through the entire book, with a new project every week or two.

I will be showing each project in the posts to come.

{ 3 comments... }

Helen Hill 07.13.09 at 12:07 am

Hi Laurie,

I bought the Stephen O’Keefe book too! In fact, that’s the book which shaped a great deal of what I do, from the list of tools, to how I first soldered, etc, etc. It was the first book I read cover to cover, to see “how it’s done”, and it was written in such a way that made me think “I can do that”. I’ve made many changes to my working methods, as a result of being an Orchid member, but his book is a great place to start. I wasn’t personally keen on his jewellery, but obviously you can modify the projects to better suit your own aesthetic. Happy making and hope your shoulder heals very soon.

Helen Hill

Victoria Woollen-Danner 07.16.09 at 10:11 am

Hi Laurie,

I’m looking forward to seeing your work in progress. You’ve approached teaching yourself skills in a really practical way. I’m self taught, for the most part, and I can appreciate the challenges ahead of you. If we ever get a critique group going it would be a benefit in my humble opinion.

Victoria

Cassandra 08.19.09 at 1:09 pm

Hi Laurie,

Love the blog! I bought the book by Jinks McGrath and have to say that it is pretty good. I took a continuing education course at a college here in Toronto and was able to follow along with all of the terminology mentioned in the book. I was also able to revise all of the techniques that I had accomplished in the course, in the book, and learn a few new things along the way. The one thing that I find the book lacks is that there, in my mind, enough practice projects that show you all the techniques covered (only 6 projects available).

Another book that I picked up which I think is even better than the Jinks McGrath book is Step By Step Jewelry Workshop by Nicola Hurst. I think it does a better job of explaining all of the steps involved in a technique (hence the name, step by step) but it also has more projects available for on hand practice (it has 13 projects). Another thing to note is that all of the projects are very different from each other and has the book has a great resources section at the back of the book. It's definitely something worth checking out.

Cassandra.

Project #1 - Octo Ring

by LAURIE JANE KERN *on* JULY 15, 2009 ·

This is the first project in the book Jewelry Making - Tips & Tricks, that I discussed in my last post.

The project is to make a ring from a piece of wire, not a wound link but a piece right off the spool or coil in the silver vault.

The Adventurous Silversmith Blog History Blogging for those who aspire to be a silversmith

I cut four pieces of wire so I would be able to do a bit more practicing and see how consistent my work would be. You need a ring mandrel and a hammer for this, and also having a ring size measuring stick allowed me to measure the ring size before I hammered the 8 sides on each one, to see how the ring size grew.

Here is a picture of the result, after pickling and 4 days in the vibra-ora-torium!



{ 2 comments... }

Helen Hill 07.19.09 at 11:21 am

Cool! They're really neat. That's one project from the book which I did plan to make but never got round to it. Great to see the results.

Laurie Jane Kern 07.19.09 at 12:35 pm

Oh, and wait to you see what's next. I am working on it right now!

Project #2 - 'S' ring and bonus project

by LAURIE JANE KERN on JULY 25, 2009 ·

It has been a busy week, and I have only now had the time to take my projects out of the vibrator. I put them in last Sunday evening.

Yes, last Sunday I tackled the second project in the 'Workshop' book, which is to make an 'S' ring. This project builds upon and modifies the ring made in project #1. Here is a picture of some of the 'S' rings I made



I then took this project further and decided, why not make them nest. So off I went and made more ring, of the same size, and just before I twisted the 's', I put them together with tape to hold them in position. After taping them together I put them on the ring mandrel and twisted. Here is the result.



Double S

But after that, I was looking at the book, and I noticed that at the end of project 1 there was a picture of a stone, in a bezel, mounted on the octo' ring. I scoured the book but this was not a project that was listed. It is on page 40 in the lower right corner of the page, if you have the book. This ring was a small garnet cab and was just calling to me.

Well, knowing how to make a bezel and I had some small garnet cabs in my stash, I then pulled out more wire, made 4 more octo rings, then made the bezels cups with an open back so light can come through the stones, soldered the bezel cups to the rings, and set the stones. I did find I had picked a bezel wire that was just a bit too big, but proceeded with the setting, liking the rustic dimpled look the setting ended up with.

Finally, after almost 8 hours of work [making 's', double 's' and garnet rings] I had over 14 items! Into the polishing tumbler they went. Here are the garnet

rings. The other 3 will go to friends: Elisa of Scotland, Janda the Fair Maiden of Tran, and Jean of San Jacinto.



{ 4 comments... read them below or [add one](#) }

Valerie Heck 07.26.09 at 4:23 am

That is a great project!

Congrats!

Valerie

Helen Hill 07.26.09 at 10:57 am

Loving the nesting “S” ring! I guess you could easily solder them together at the back if you wanted to. As you said, the bezels on the garnet rings were a bit too tall, but easily remedied next time, by using a bezel that’s not so high, or if you find it is too high, sand it down before you fit the stone. Did you tumble after setting stones? That’s perhaps why there are a few chips in the garnets. Better to tumble before setting them, then a final polish after setting. Having said all that, they are really good and far superior to my early efforts. The girls will be very pleased with them I’m sure. You’re a quick worker too Laurie!

heather skowood 07.28.09 at 4:27 pm
Hi Laurie!

Thanx again for stoppin' in and commenting on my blog. Much appreciated.

I love your writing and your work. It sounds like you truly enjoy making. I feel the same making is breathing. Great job on the 'S' rings they look great!

How is your arm coming along, getting stronger?

Peace.

Laurie Jane Kern 07.28.09 at 6:08 pm

The arm is doing great, thanks for asking. I can almost raise my arm vertical over my head and I am beginning to get the range of motion to put my arm behind my back. I am now lifting light weights but after a long PT session the shoulder does hurt some. It looks like about 4 more weeks of PT, 3x's per week - so I am counting the days.!

Project #3 - Planished Bangle

by LAURIE JANE KERN *on* JULY 30, 2009 ·

I started this over the weekend, then went out to dinner, had to go to work, and you know how it goes... Your day job just takes over.

BUT I went into work early today so I could get home early and finish this. You see on Sunday I had cut out the copper (the book says bronze, but copper is what I had), and rounded the ends, and there it sat.

So today, when I got home, I was able to put my NEW mushroom stake in the bench vise [reminder to me: Drill hole in work bench to hold stakes], pulled out my planishing hammer and went at it. Gosh it was fun [despite imagining I was whacking someone] with the balled end. Then when I was done making the dimples, I turned the hammer over, and went at the edges. All this hammering took a total of maybe 30 minutes.

Then on to annealing, quenching and over to the polishing wheel.

It polished up well, and then I had to shape it. I don't have a bracelet mandrel as I usually use the one at the club, so I found some different sized spray cans to use, and viola!



{ 2 comments... }

Helen Hill 08.01.09 at 1:37 pm

That's pretty Laurie. I'll bet you had a lot of fun hammering that bangle.

Hammering is so therapeutic.

Jean 08.04.09 at 7:23 am

I got to actually try it on Sunday and it was beautiful. Problem was, Laurie wanted it back!!! LOL

You're skills are amazing - keep going - can't wait to see what's next!

Thanks for the help with the pendant!

Jean

Building on Learned Skills

by LAURIE JANE KERN on AUGUST 7, 2009 ·

Last week I finished the third project in the Jewelry ([home course](#)) book and once again my mind is thinking beyond the basic skill and form taught.

How? - The project was for a copper planished bangle (it is really a cuff, but that's a minor point). So why not make it out of silver?

OR why not do some etching, engraving or cut outs? Having read the book, several times over already, these other skills are covered in later project. And these upcoming skills are some I have not even tried yet!

I can even see a bezel set stone on the cuff.

Thus my task(s) for this weekend are to make the cuff out of silver - maybe two even, and one or two more out of copper. Then I am going to look at my stash of cabs and do a bezel set on at least one cuff.

Of course pictures will follow!

Can Jewish Girls Have An Epiphany?

by LAURIE JANE KERN on AUGUST 9, 2009

e piph a ny: [Pronunciation](#) [i-pif-uh-nee]

–noun, plural -nies.

- 1 (initial capital letter) a Christian festival, observed on January 6, commemorating the manifestation of Christ to the gentiles in the persons of the Magi; Twelfth-day.
- 2 an appearance or manifestation, esp. of a deity.
- 3 **a sudden, intuitive perception of or insight into the reality or essential meaning of something, usually initiated by some simple, homely, or commonplace occurrence or experience.**
- 4 a literary work or section of a work presenting, usually symbolically, such a moment of revelation and insight.

If you pay attention to the third definition, I guess so, cause it's not January and I did not see any deities!!

Here is what happened:

I made my silver planished bangle/cuff yesterday (hold on, the pictures will be at the end). I cut out the 1/2" by 6" long silver sheet. I then filed the sides straight and rounded the ends. I pulled 2 small garnet cabs out of my stock and then made bezels for them. I soldered the bezels on and then I went at the silver with the planishing hammer. I really enjoyed it.

Who would have thought that hammering a piece of silver or copper would make me happy. And this time I was not imagining it was someone I worked with (heh-heh). Watching the dimples go into the metal, making sure I did not miss a spot, keeping it random - well that was went the first part of the joy came to me.

Oh - BTW, I decided to make a "reverse" cuff by placing the garnets on each end of the cuff (not in the middle) so the opening is worn to the outside - thus showing off the garnets.

After the planishing, I annealed, and placed the silver into the pickle pot. This was all yesterday, Saturday. Some where in there I made a comment to my husband that I had to get better at this cause I was really, really, I mean really having a good time.

And then around midnight I went to bed after a good hot shower and some DVD's from Elisa of Scotland. I then had some dreams - one was me making a hammered copper bowl and the other one was about being in a store buying Arts & Crafts and Art Nouveau style jewelry - I will come back to this, just hold on.

Early this morning I took - cut actually, the backs out of the silver where the garnets will go. This will let the light in. After that, it was to the buffing wheels and boy did it sparkle, and I finally set the two garnets, formed the shape and I was rather satisfied with myself.

Back to the epiphany It was after I set the garnets and was all done that I realized this is what I enjoyed. I was also having ideas of how to make a pendant, earrings and another/different bracelet - all with the hammered texture and garnets - my mind has been racing all day.

I love both styles - Arts & Crafts and Nouveau (I also like Deco too, Erte is my favorite and I even own a sculpture!) but had I thought about this as "MY VOICE"? **NO** - and why hadn't I??? I have spent hours drooling over the designs of Tiffany, Charles Rennie Mackintosh, Frank Lloyd Wright - I am even wearing jewelry inspired by Mackintosh RIGHT NOW.

So, I think I have found my voice, my direction.

[addition @ 7am on Monday: I also see myself making cups, bowls and other home items, not just jewelry]



{ 1 comment... }

Elaine Luther 08.10.09 at 4:41 am

Of course Jewish girls can have epiphanies! There are the religious kind and the completely non-religious kind.

And congrats on finding love!

Getting my (silver) ducks in a row

by LAURIE JANE KERN on AUGUST 14, 2009

Just my luck that last week I make a post to the forum about where to learn silver/metalsmithing, when it is time for the summer break! O.K. no big deal, I will follow up on this after the list resumes.

And this Saturday I am taking the Rolling Mill class down at [Jay Whaley Studios](#) in San Diego and I had emailed Terri to find out if I could bring *my* scrap silver since we were going to be learning how to recycle scrap, pour ingots and then make wire and sheet on the rolling mill.

But fortunately, for me, Terri down at Jay Whaley Studios had read my post. Not only did she say that I could bring my scrap to work on BUT that in response to my post, I should talk to Jay about what I want to do. I responded by saying that I had looked at what Jay was offering but since I had not seen sessions devoted to metalsmithing, well ... I assumed (wrong of course). Terri said that Jay will be offering more classes/workshops at his studio and that IF I DID NOT ASK HOW WAS I TO KNOW what was or was not possible to do. [yes, just keep going duh!]

I just can't wait for tomorrow...

In the mean time, I have ordered some books one being "Copper Work: An Illustrated Textbook for Teachers and Students in the Manual Arts" by Augustus F. Rose and published in 1909 I might add. I found it on Google Books (I love Google Books as most times I can preview a book before buying it) and I bought it at Alibris, since you can see the quality, published date, edition and where it is being shipped from preferably out of state if you want to avoid sale tax! I also

ordered a few other books about metal and silver smithing... once they arrive I will add them to my Resources page.

If you know of a book that you want to recommend, please let me know! And in the mean time, I have more projects from the book to do.

Kinda Off Line - For a Bit

by LAURIE JANE KERN *on* AUGUST 22, 2009 ·

I am rebuilding my laptop and the moment so I have not installed all my software, pictures and other apps that I use.

The rolling mill class last week was great, I now want one!

More to follow soon, I promise.

Rolling Mill Class and Silversmithing

by LAURIE JANE KERN *on* AUGUST 25, 2009 ·

I took the rolling mill class at Jay Whaley Studio two weeks ago.

IT WAS FANTASTIC!

First we learned about alloying our own silver and gold. Jay even told us about other casting grains that can be used with fine silver to make “Sterling” but this other casting grain is not the standard copper alloy nor argentium alloy! The reason we don’t see it being sold as sheet and wire is the fact that it does not have a large following YET.

Next was casting and we all had the opportunity to use the other alloy but since I brought my own scrap, I decided to cast with what I had brought. I made two

round ingot and a rectangular ingot. Most of us in the workshop used silver but one woman brought scrap gold.

After we were done casting it was on to the rolling mill. Jay has several rolling mills but the BIG one is a top of the line with separate rollers for sheet and wire. I took one of the round ingots and made square wire. It was over 13" long and about 12g. The wire I twisted and now wear as a bangle. Next, from the rectangular ingot made a long sheet .4" wide by over 12" long @ 18g. I then roller printed on it a fiber sheet. Over the past two weeks I have cut it into segments, filed the edges and corners round and it is now a pair of earrings and a bracelet. (Pictures further down)

I also spoke to Jay about taking classes and we talked about my desire to learn to raise vessels. He told me that he can teach me quite a bit on my "quest" but not raising vessels! We discussed what I wanted to do with my craft and eventually I did decide to take a 9 week workshop class from him (we work on what I want to learn) which will get me part way there. I am going to focus on piercing, chasing and repousse techniques. And maybe next summer I will go to "Adult" camp where I can spend a week learning to raise metal.

In the mean time, I have cast all of my scrap down to ingot - only to aggregate it so it is not all over the place. I now have 7+ troy ounces of silver waiting to be rolled and the best part is Obi-Wan Don has a rolling mill so until I get one [birthday present hint, hint] he's only 3 miles away.

Here are two pictures - one of the ingots before the rolling mill and the next is the results after the rolling mill. The middle ingot is the same in both pictures.



I Taught A Class

by LAURIE JANE KERN *on* SEPTEMBER 4, 2009

I just finished teaching my first class!

Several weeks ago, months actually, I taught myself Viking Knit. I was wearing when I made a trip down to the Palomar club. I passed around and the ladies (and you know who you are!) all wanted to know about it. Diane as teaching the class that night, and soon afterwards we talked about me teaching it.

I then went off for my shoulder surgery and did not get back down to the club until July. It was during that visit that we decide to do it in August. One thing let to another and eventually we put out an email that the class would be held over two nights, the last week of August and the first week of September.

I decided that we should first work in copper. This way if anybody had a major boo-boo, we could start over without wasting silver and \$\$\$\$\$.

And so, last week was the first night and everyone went home with 26g copper wire, their leader, and a dowel to work on. When we met yesterday, everyone had enough done to make at least a bracelet. Annie, had gotten hooked and had done a bracelet and necklace!!. So yesterdays session was on using the draw plate and making cone end caps.

A good time was had by all!

Oh, and I have now been asked what I am going to teach next

Double Oh - I am done with PT and my shoulder is doing just fine. I have to still do some exercises but that's easy.

I Beat it into Submission

by LAURIE JANE KERN *on* SEPTEMBER 7, 2009

Several months ago, I bought a beautiful Bruneau Jasper that was cabbed and polished. It was not cheap but well worth the money. I have a very old Lapidary journal that had an article about Bruneau jaspers and how mounting them in copper enhanced the colors - and looking at the one I had bought, next to some copper sheet really did make it pop.

I knew what I had to do!

First I make some copper viking knit 'chain' with coiled ends. You have to have a copper chain for a copper pendant.

Then I went looking for copper bezel wire. Well that was impossible to find so I had to make my own. I was already signed up for Jay's rolling mill class - no problem I would wait until I took it.

And I waited, and recovered from my shoulder surgery.

During this down time, I doodled some designs. And waited some more.

The rolling mill class was August 15 and a week later I was down at the club, using the small rolling mill to make my copper bezel.

During the soldering of the first bezel, I blew out the joint, my torch was too hot and the wire too thin (28 g). Back to the club to roll some more and I then got my bezel completed 26 gauge this time.

I had sawed and filed my backing in-between the bezel making. It was rectangular, it had rounded corners, I then planished it with a hammer (that was my next mistake). Because I had planished the outer area of the backing, it has

stretched and warped and no matter how I sanded the bezel it would not lay on the backing with out a gap.

I thought I would be smart [i.e. STUPID] - I used some binding wire and got most of the edges to meet the backing and started to solder. WRONG, the solder just flowed out the gaps and all over the backing and then I again blew out the bezel.

This was yesterday, I was sooo angry at the copper and myself. I even considered selling the cab on and not deal with it at all. I spent the night watching stupid movies and knitting. This morning was another matter. I would just put it away for a few months, post some questions on the Orchid list and see what help I could get.

Did I put the cab away - NO! I pulled out more of the bezel wire and made a new one. I made a new backing and decided to planish it AFTER the bezel was soldered. It was 'laurie go slow, you can do this, you can beat it at it's own game'

I DID!!!!!!!!!!!!!! YES IN DEEDY I BEAT IT.

I have just finished setting the cab. I needs a bit of cleaning up but here it is.. TA DA



Terri - you asked for it and here it is on my dirty work bench (10:21 pm)



{ 8 comments... }

teresamasters 09.07.09 at 6:35 pm

Laurie,

Persistence and questions will get you through every time. Would be great to see the copper creation on other than a close in color background. Looks good from here.

Spend a bit of time in the Orchid Archives, and read up on bezel gauges. Most commercial bezels are too thin. Easy to fold over, but that is all. A heavier bezel is far more impressive, and also lends itself to embellishment, either hand or rolling mill. Less likely to melt as well.

Keep up the excellent striving.

Hugs,

Terrie

taueret 09.08.09 at 1:38 am

hi there, I am just exploring all teh Orchid blogs and I was excited to find yours- I love copper and think it looks great with your stone. Also well done on persevering- I walk away from my bench with my jaw clenched several times a week but I always am back before long! Your success is inspiring!

Terrie Masters 09.08.09 at 5:23 am

Laurie,

Ahhh, now I can see the texturing detail, and that is good. Quite a lovely piece young lady. The Chain looks very nice as well.

When you start to take your class with Jay, perhaps you can use the photo set up in the back room and get some good photos to really show up your smithing efforts.

Thanks for your extra effort.

Hugs,

Terrie

Vicki Kataja 09.08.09 at 7:50 pm

Very cool, Laurie!

Iris 09.08.09 at 8:15 pm

This turned out very lovely, Laurie! Your persistence really paid off.

I would never have thought of using copper with Bruneau jasper but it really does make the stone pop. It must have taken a steady hand to hammer the edge without smashing the bezel!

You did a great job on the chain too! I have a VK class later this month and am really looking forward to it.

Laurie Jane Kern 09.08.09 at 9:13 pm

I would not have thought about the copper either until I saw that article in the old Lapidary Journal. I have another Jasper that is very brown - I might have to use Bronze.

To get the planishing, I made a tiny 'hammer' out of a 10 penny nail. I ground down the point and then polished it. By using the nail and hitting it with the hammer I was able to avoid the bezel. I also use the nail to add the texture to the bezel.

Diane 09.30.09 at 3:55 pm

Laurie,

This is beautiful and look at all you learned in the process!

Meryl Free 10.24.09 at 6:44 pm

I am new to jewelry making and could relate to your frustration and perseverance. I love copper with sterling and with blue topaz and carnelian. Your

jasper pendant looks beautiful. I love the woven chain! Congratulations. I have been working my copper with a very smooth finish. The problem I have is that the beautiful warm luster I achieve starts to brown the day after I finish painstakingly polishing it. Do you or does any one have a suggestion for this problem? I have tried a clear resin spray for metals which peeled immediately. Wax for metal was suggested, I bought some but have yet to try it.

Metal Color and More

by LAURIE JANE KERN *on* SEPTEMBER 16, 2009

In my last post I wrote about using copper to mount a Bruneau Jasper. I am now starting to work with 2 other jasper cabs that I have, which are mostly of a tan and brown nature.

I placed the two of them along side some more copper sheet like I did with the Bruneau, but this time I concluded that copper is not the best metal to use. I tried silver and it makes the stones look flat. The more I looked at the cabs I began to realize that my eyes kept returning to the brown. Then I came to the conclusion that bronze might be the best material to use, and if needed maybe a slight patina would be needed on the final piece. I have ordered some sheet which I can use not only for the mounting plate but I can take a strip to the rolling mill and make my bezel too.

All of this has made me recall a statement someone made to me quite recently.

As you might remember (or not); I have been on a search for a teacher/mentor to learn metal smithing - forging, sinking, raising and such. I have spoken and emailed a lot of people in the past few weeks and when I discussed what I am looking to learn I stated that I am open to working in copper and bronze - as well as silver. I would even work with tin and brass if appropriate. [I also think that

learning on these less expensive metals is best and considering the price of silver these day, why wouldn't you!]

Well the person in question emphatically said: I am not teaching these days and if I was, I don't work in those metals.

I found it a bit odd at the time and I still find this odd.

Ok, so you are not teaching these days, I can move on and find someone else. Thanks for your time.

But the “not working in those metals” came across - well snobbish! How dare I even mention working in these metals! What was I thinking?

I can't imagine that metal smiths, who are now working in silver and gold look down their noses at these materials.

I want to believe that when learning the art, the material they first hit with a hammer was something other than silver and gold. The Silversmithing books I have even instructs the reader to use copper and lead sheet to see how metal moves!

Now that I have put this out there, well I can move on but I am curious as to what you think.

{ 5 comments... }

Helen Hill 09.17.09 at 1:45 am

I guess it depends where you lie in the whole jewellery-making scale. Personally, I've never used anything other than silver and occasionally gold and palladium.

Not because I look down my nose at other metals, but because that's the direction I decided to go in when I started on my jewellery journey. I figured that since I wanted to make silver jewellery, I'd learn by using silver. Ultimately, I want to be working in high karat golds and platinum, ie I want to be a maker of fine jewellery. It's what I prefer to wear, and so it's what I want to make, and it's where I want to elevate my skills to with regard to jewellery.

However, if you're talking about silversmithing, which you obviously are, ie raising, sinking, etc - then silver will probably be prohibitively expensive to learn with. It's one thing to make an element for a piece of jewellery, have it go wrong, then chuck it into the scrap pile to be melted down later to make some fresh sheet or wire. But it's quite another thing to make a mistake when raising a vessel from a large piece of sheet. You can't melt it down, cast an ingot and roll out some sheet at home to start again when working on that scale.

There's room for all types of makers, and room for all materials. Good luck, and I hope you find a good teacher. Sounds like you've changed direction with your metalsmithing endeavours.

Taueret 09.17.09 at 1:20 pm

I think it's a pretty common/normal attitude in any craft/art community. That's ok- it just means that you haven't yet found the right person to be your mentor.

laima 09.18.09 at 4:16 am

If you look thru my behance page, <http://www.behance.net/ljvmv>, you will find several images and video of copper jewelry. My work is more conceptual in nature, rather than commercially oriented. The smoky quartz stone set within the forged copper ring is one I faceted myself, as the tiger's eye cabochon is one I formed myself too. I've enjoyed working with copper for it's color, malleability

and ‘expressive’ qualities, as well as, incorporating art metal jewelry into inter-media explorations.

Judy Bjorkman 09.18.09 at 4:18 am

It could be that the person to whom you spoke is reluctant to work in metals other than those with which he/she is familiar. While many things are the same, from metal to metal, others are not (such as melting points, etc.) — the person may not have wanted to look incompetent.

I’d say, just ignore the remark about “those metals,” and work in whatever one you enjoy. I work in brass, copper, and nickel-silver because I like large jewelry pieces. I’d love to work in gold, but then you have to lock away your materials, and I’ve known people who were afraid to wear their large gold pieces in public. If a customer likes something of mine made in silver, then I can do that (and charge more). My customers seem happy with base metal, though.

We all have our “druthers” — I wouldn’t work in platinum. I think it’s rather ugly, not nearly as beautiful as silver. To each their own. –Judy

Boot~C 10.20.09 at 12:56 pm

I am having much the same problem. I am taking a class in metalsmithing, but can’t find all the components in copper I want to use (bezel wire). My teacher is open to metals besides silver, but the availability of supplies isn’t there. I like silver, (wear only silver jewelry in fact) but feel copper is more attuned to what I want to use the pieces.

Why I Love The Rio Grande Catalog(s)

by LAURIE JANE KERN *on* OCTOBER 3, 2009

I have not written much in the past few weeks because I have been down with the Flu. Luckily it has not been the H1N1 but this one certainly has made me sick for

almost 3 weeks with chills, fevers, sore throat, loss of voice, stuffed head, aches and extreme tiredness.

Yesterday I felt well enough to actually venture into my office cum studio where I did a bit of organizing and putting things away. I then found last years Rio Grande catalog which I proceeded to rip apart. Despite the fact that I want one of *EVERYTHING*, I love the catalog because of the information boxes spattered through out the catalog.

When a new catalog arrives my husband, who gets the mail, holds it out towards me teasingly and says “Ohh, look what I have for you!” I usually then sit down in my favorite reading chair with the catalog and literally read the catalog from cover to cover and put post-it notes everywhere as if it was the Sears Christmas edition. Soon afterwards, I usually take the old catalog and cut out the information boxes and tape them into the (current) idea book I am using. This is information to keep handy as you never know when you might need it.

I know, you think I am crazy but some of the information I have placed into my book has been useful during workshops I have taken. For example, I have the ring comparison chart taped in my book. This chart not only has a guide to convert between the US, UK, French, German, and Swiss systems, the chart also gives the inside diameter and circumference measurements. I was in a ring class several months ago and another student knew their ring size but wanted to know how long to cut the half round wire we were using for the shank. I was able to whip out book, locate the ring chart and show her.

Here is just some of the information that you can get out of the catalog:

- Gauge Thickness

- Weight and Measurement Conversions
- Saw Blade Specs
- Ring Size Comparison Chart
- What Type of Hammer to Use
- The Language of Buffing
- Buff and Compound Selection Guide

I hope you take a good look at your catalog the next time and save these tidbits.

{ 3 comments... }

Michael Sabo 10.03.09 at 10:06 pm

I, too, am a catalog, real book... tangible person. I also sit and relish the new one marveling over this and that, but paying attention and “filing away in my head” many of your above points. I remember as a kid, always having \$10.00 allotted for each to pick out a Christmas present and literally devouring the Montgomery Wards, Penny’s, and Sears catalogs... carries over to the present. Nice thoughtful, well written piece.... peace.

Diane 10.04.09 at 5:43 pm

I love Rio’s info boxes too and have cut them out for reference. You know how old we are because we remeber the Sears Wish Book.

Kristin 11.09.09 at 9:46 pm

Good advice! I’m going to have to do this from now on!

Spoon-erism’s

by LAURIE JANE KERN on OCTOBER 11, 2009

Spoonerisms: The terms applied to making a spoon. That’s my definition!

After much searching and talking to a lot of people, I found someone to teach me metal smithing - real metal smithing where you are hammering and moving metal!!

Mary N, who is also a member of the Palomar Gem & Mineral Club told me to contact Deb Jemmott. Mary was taking a class from her at San Diego Community College. [Mary was in my Viking Knit class at the time] - So after a few emails and quite a bit of telephone tag, not only had I spoken to Deb but we set up an all day session. Deb also sent out a call for other students, and Mary signed up too. So, yesterday we had our class, focusing on forming, forging and sinking!

OH MY GOD, IT WAS SO MUCH FUN! We arrived at 10 am and for the next 6 hours we learned how to properly select the working height, hold the hammer and then we proceeded to hammer on aluminum (as it never work hardens thus no annealing required) and Copper. We formed, dapped, annealed, Bouged, planished, and sunk metal using cross pein hammers, sinking hammers, and planishing hammers.

I was able to make a tiny - I mean small bowl with a rim and from an oval blank as spoon bowl (pictures below). Mary worked on a bowl and then started a 'oak' leaf bowl/dish [Mary let me know if I got it correct] which I think she is going to continue in the class at the community college.

After our session, I met the Janda, the Fair Maiden of Tran at our favorite Thai restaurant in San Marcos as it was only anther 10 minute drive from Deb's house. We had yummy Crab Cake Panang for dinner and caught up on lots of gossip. I was home by 7:30 pm and then had to tell everything to my husband.

It was off to bet at midnight, tired and very happy.



{ 2 comments... }

steve mashburn 10.13.09 at 11:47 am

nothing to stir the blood like learning a new craft! Moving metal does move the mind also... You can make things that tin smiths will say are impossible!

Kerri Duncan 10.14.09 at 4:27 am

I loved the posting! I think *smithing* as a craft is loosely applied to many areas as a collective term these days... but the true use is beautiful- to move metal with force from your own hands is awesome!

-Loved the rimmed bowl- and the Tri-angled dish- If you're in the mood or have the inclination to make a bit of a holiday/vacation out of smithing- I would highly recommend Brian Clarke in Ireland! He holds spoon and sinking/raising as well as chasing/repousse' week long workshops! His web-address is *//homepage.tinet.ie/~ybc/* and he is offering weekend shop classes in France as well.

-I wanted to know more about true smithing- and came away from a most pleasurable week with the basics of movement, and a new vision of metals and appreciation for things like classically made pieces.

-I have enjoyed your blog and postings- keep 'em going! Be safe and have a great day!

KDuncan

You know you're into tools when...

by LAURIE JANE KERN on OCTOBER 18, 2009

...YOU have more fun at the tool store than your HUSBAND (or spouse to be P.C) !!

Let me explain

O.K., so it might have something to do with me being an engineer but NOT all my engineering friends are into tools, especially the Software engineers, and there are many who are on this list who are not engineers but love their tools.

In many cases it is not about even using the tools, it's about having as well.

Last week when I was taking my first class with Deb, we used various hammers, doming blocks, punches, anvils and such. The next day, Sunday, I went online to find out where Harbor Freight was in our area. For those of you who are not familiar with the store it is a tool shop for the non-home improvement people. Think of Home Depot or Lowes for the "shop people" or mechanically inclined.

I found that the closest was in Escondido even though rumor was that a store had opened up in the Temecula/Murrieta area. But do not fret if you do not live in the San Diego area as they have stores all around the country as well as a on-line store. Using the website I identified several items to purchase and planned a visit in the next few weeks.

But low and behold a 15% off EVERYTHING sale coupon for the weekend appeared in my email inbox on Thursday. ROAD TRIP! So on Friday my husband got me lots-O-cash and yesterday at noon we drove the 45 minutes south to raid the Harbor Freight store.

We were in there for 2 hours!

I had my list but my husband wandered off for the smaller items he was interested in.

I SCORED BIG TIME here is what I got: a doming block with 35 punches with a stand, a 1 pound anvil, a 3 anvil (both which I will have to refinish to get a better surface), a 1/2 horsepower buffing motor, an assortment of cotton buffing wheels, a rather large brass mallet, several packages of shop towels, assorted drill bits, a Delrin conical mallet, extra exact-o blades and a few things I can't even think of now.

Our bill was just over \$150 and on the way home my husband said: "That was fun but I think you had more fun than me!" I then asked if we could go back - right now ;=))

{ 2 comments... }

terry brake 10.19.09 at 7:22 pm

LJK, I do the same. My hubby pulls me out of Harbor Freight. I look too long, much of it is cheap, (my price) but not all junk. The flex shaft is pretty poor tho... good thing I'm just hobbier now, not production.

Sandra Gilbert 10.21.09 at 10:56 am

Oh my, this story was great!

My dh says that if we get separated in a hardware store, he can ALWAYS find me in the tool section. Oh and by the way, I too am an engineer: a software engineer ;->

A Handful of Hammers

by LAURIE JANE KERN *on* NOVEMBER 1, 2009

If its a gaggle of geese, a herd of cows, a pod of porpoises; what would a handful of hammers be??

My Hammers have finally arrived.

After my class with Deb (read the post Spoon-erism's) I asked about an initial set of hammers to purchase and Deb sent back a list of 5 hammers: 1 planishing; 1 raising; and 3 sinking/forming hammers in a large, medium and small size. I have put links to all 5 at the bottom of the post if you are interested.

I did some checking around on the web and Rio (where the links point to) really did have the best prices so I decided to bite the bullet and get them all at once. Then I thought that since Mary was in the class too; that she might want some hammers as well and this way we could get a quantity break (yes, there was quantity break when you bought TWO) and also save on shipping.

It took several days of emails back and forth to finalize what we both wanted as we also went for 2 of the large sandbags as these are useful for sinking. Unfortunately several of the hammers were on backorder. Two of the three hammers plus the sandbags arrived last weekend but the smaller sinking hammers were the ones on backorder.

And the remaining hammers arrived yesterday - I can now start whaling on some metal. And this leads me to the next part - projects. I will take some more classes with Deb, that is a given. But to give me practice in between those sessions I have bought the book "The Craft of Silversmithing" by Alex Austin. The projects in the book work you through forging to sinking and raising. I will be doing many of the projects in copper the first time for practice. This is so when I really mess up with odd placed ding's or scratches I don't have to worry about it.

For a list of collective nouns look here:

http://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Transwiki:List_of_collective_nouns_by_subject

For the hammers from Rio look here:

this is the raising hammer that is the largest one:

http://www.riogrande.com/MemberArea/ProductPage.aspx?assetname=112424&page=GRID&free_text%7c1255305206251=hammers&first_answer=46

this is the forming hammer that is the largest one:

http://www.riogrande.com/MemberArea/ProductPage.aspx?assetname=112408&page=GRID&free_text%7c1255305206251=hammers&first_answer=61

this is the forming hammer that is the medium size :

http://www.riogrande.com/MemberArea/ProductPage.aspx?assetname=112405&page=GRID&free_text%7c1255305206251=hammers&first_answer=76

this is the smallest sinking (forming) hammer:

http://www.riogrande.com/MemberArea/ProductPage.aspx?assetname=112399&page=GRID&free_text%7c1255305562251=forming+hammer

this is the planishing hammer :

http://www.riogrande.com/MemberArea/ProductPage.aspx?assetname=112402&page=GRID&free_text%7c1255305206251=hammers&first_answer=76

{ 1 comment... }

Jerry Fowler 11.02.09 at 8:31 am

One can never have to many hammers can they? I hope not because I'm a sucker for every hammer I see. I pick them up at yard sales, estate sales, supply stores, antique stores, junk stores, well just about anywhere even the side of the road. They are such useful tools and can be modified so easily. Have fun with your new friends.

It's Hammer'n Time!!

by LAURIE JANE KERN on NOVEMBER 9, 2009

My backordered hammers arrived on Friday so I decided that Sunday would be the time to play and whale away on some copper.

So after cutting out a 4" disc of 18g copper; my 5 hammers, the forming stakes, copper disc and I headed off to the garage at 11:00 am [Elisa says this sounds like the intro to a Roald Dahl's Tales of the Unexpected story...]

Here are the hammers and copper on the sandbag in the garage.



I also had a small 2" disc with me which I decided would be another small bowl with a rim, similar to the one I made at Deb's 3 weeks ago.

After annealing, I then proceeded to start sinking and making quite a bit of noise - What Fun! I don't have all the forming stakes I would like, so I used the punches from the dapping block to assist in making the small bowl. To get me at the correct height, I have to stand on a large block of wood that is left over from our patio cover! [Don't laugh! but it works, and yes this is what the Aspiring Silversmith looks like with bed-head hair.]



This next picture is of the original bowl and the new one without the rim - yet. Also notice the start of a patina on the original bowl.



To make the large bowl, I used my mushroom stake - the curve on this is rather shallow but I think the bowl ended up with a really nice shape. Deb said that I

hammered too close to the edge, which is true but the disc did not have a clean edge to begin with and I now think it looks like the edge on a burl-wood bowl

And finally, the two finished bowls at about 4:00 PM. The large bowl ended up approximately 3.5" in diameter and a tad over 1.5" height



{ 4 comments... }

Boot~C 11.10.09 at 5:23 am

beautiful~now I want to make some bowls, too!

Laurie Jane Kern 11.10.09 at 6:05 am

Boot-C; Come and join the party, the more the merrier! It was so much fun.

Jerry Fowler 11.10.09 at 8:39 am

Nice hammers and more to come in the future? May the hammer be with you and don't forget hearing protection.

Anita 11.12.09 at 7:11 pm

Hi there!

Where in California are you? I'm in San Clemente.

I spent the day hammering too.

Anita

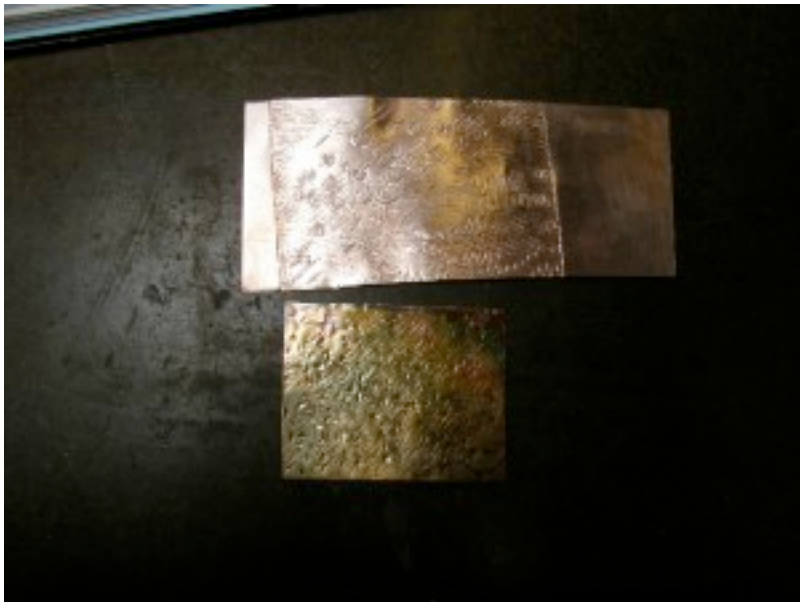
Fold Forming and Using A Hydraulic Press

by LAURIE JANE KERN on NOVEMBER 15, 2009

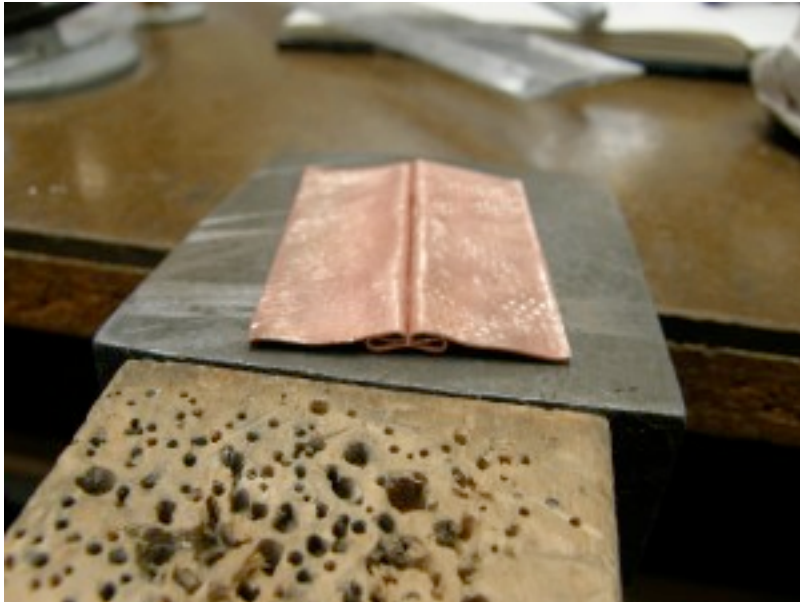
I spent yesterday in Pasadena at [Farrin O'Connor](#) taking a class on Fold Forming and using a hydraulic press. The class was taught by Carl and you can see his work [here](#) to get an idea of what we were making.

I decided that my piece would use copper for the majority of the piece that way it would look ancient - that and the fact that the amount of silver sheet to make the piece would cost a lot if anything went wrong!

We started off texturing our sheets, then annealing them. Here are mine with a pit of flame patina.



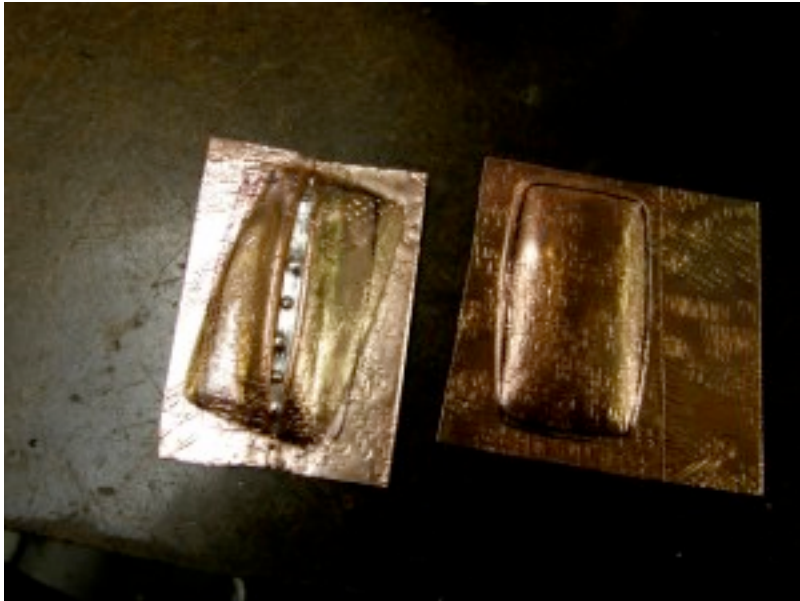
After the annealing we learned to make a T-Fold you do this by folding the larger sheet over a wood dowel and after removing the dowel, then flattening the pocket and fold the long leaves back on themselves.



We then took a small strip of patterned metal and slid it into the T-Pocket, this is so after the hydro-press, the fold will open up and reveal the other material. Here is the piece just before I put it in to the press.



I chose a rectangular die that had a slight curve to each side of the square. Because of the fold and the inner strip, we had to press the item 3 times, with another round of annealing before the final press. This is the result. I also pressed a single sheet for the backing. See how with the deforming, the pressure spreads open the gap and pushed out the inserted piece.



I still have to assemble the halves using some micro-bolts and add a bale. Overall it reminds me of an ancient medallion of office from either China or Japan - where they had some very odd ones.

And here is my finished piece @4:15 pm Sunday night - this entire piece was made without any solder too.

Now, for that bit of silver wire at the top between the micro-bolts for the bale... I figured if this is MY found object.. someone might have found it before me. With a missing bolt they might have used a small twist of wire to hold the top together. So that is what I did. (I actually had a problem with a bolt and it sheared off). For the bale, I stressed some silver tubing then took some wire and balled the ends and hammered them flat and also hammered various parts of the wire too. I then

drilled the holes in the flanges and twisted the wires. I bent the wires around the tubing and just pinched the wires on the underside thus with the flanged edges of the tub, the wires won't come off.

I am now going to relax and watch Iron Chef. I just can't figure out why this show is about cooking. Wouldn't a show named Iron Chef be about some one who makes Iron????



{ 5 comments... }

Wendy Edsall-Kerwin 11.15.09 at 2:41 pm

I love the way the piece came out in the last photo! It's really cool the way the under piece sneaks out of the copper. The textures are great in this piece.

Boot~C 11.15.09 at 6:58 pm

fabulous, really nice, the silver/copper combo

Wendy Edsall-Kerwin 11.16.09 at 8:05 am

I like the use of the bolts to fasten the pieces together.

Jerry Fowler 11.16.09 at 9:06 am

That is an visually interesting piece. The silver really pops out. Nice work.

Kerry Palumbo 11.17.09 at 4:54 pm

I love the bail. I really think that it compliments the piece. Copper is my favorite metal to work with and I like the look of it with the silver. I am interested in foldforming as a technique, and as my husband owns a large scale fab shop, I'd love to play with his big equipment. (oops...that didn't come out the way I meant it) Very nice.

Learning & "Sunlight and Shadow"

by LAURIE JANE KERN on NOVEMBER 21, 2009

When I want to learn something, be it sewing, cooking, embroidery/crewelwork, knitting, weaving, and now silversmithing - I want to understand the technique or process first. Why? This is so as I expand my knowledge I can then envision how two or more technique/skills can be aggregated and allow me to work on more advanced projects. It is only when I understand a minimum of one

technique [preferably two] that I can “make something” that I would consider it a project or finished piece. In this manner is possible to think beyond the current project and know that you can advance your work.

Recently I have been talking to friends about the process of learning and believe it or not there are people out there who DON'T learn this way and it does not just apply to making jewelry or silversmithing.

Yes folks, there are people who learn not in a process oriented manner but via a project or or finished piece (goal oriented) point of view. And it seem to be present in teachers as well, having taken several classes around So. Cal. in the past year.

I was talking to my friend Mike who use to teach English in the Scottish School system and he gave a great example:

We can all relate to writing “Book Reports” but a book report is really a type of essay. SO, when you had to write a book report did you want to learn how to write an essay and then apply that skill to the book report at hand OR did you think - what do I need to do to write this book report, what parts do I need. Oh, and by the way, I will worry about learning the various components (yeah, sure) then next time I have to write (you got it) another book report.

Now I am not saying that IF you are process learner, that you will remember ALL the components of an essay the second time you need to draw upon this skill. But you would remember some and have a fuzzy idea about others. With time you would know what to do so if you were asked to write an -gasp- essay it would be a no brainer.

If you are a goal oriented learner, your goal is the book report, not the components. Eventually you would learn the components but if you are asked to write an (here it comes again, wait for it...) Essay - could or would you be able to???

So far, all of this is predicated on the desire to learn how to write an essay cum book report.

Now think about making: a ring with a set stone; a bezel set cab; strings beads; etc.. Did you want to learn the processes required to make that object or did you want to just make that object?

If you want to know more about how people learn, read “Sunlight and Shadow” below and read the guest posting by Mike, and his take on the subject. AND YES, it is an Essay!

SUNLIGHT AND SHADOW Bt Mike L.

Consider a patch of sunlight falling on the skin of an amoeba-like animal. The light has immediate implications for the animal’s own state of bodily health, and for that reason it gets represented as a subjective sensation. But the light also signifies – as we now know – an objective physical fact, namely the existence of the sun. And, although the existence of the sun might not matter much to an amoeba, there are other animals and other areas of the physical world where the ability to take account of what exists ‘out there beyond my body’ could be of paramount survival value. Consider a shadow crossing the skin of the amoeba. Here an ability to represent the objective fact of an

approaching predator would – if only it were achievable by an amoeba – clearly be of considerably more consequence to the animal's survival than the ability to represent the body surface stimulus as such.

Nicholas Humphrey, A History of the Mind (1992)

This thought experiment might seem an odd way to try to begin to answer Laurie's question of the difference of view between various instructors and herself as outlined in her blog, but I start with Humphrey's imagined amoeba-like creature because it seems to me that, intentionally or not, Humphrey neatly illustrates here some important aspects of what we call 'learning':

- at its most basic level it is a response to a stimulus – here the patch of sunlight falling on the skin
- the response operates simultaneously in at least two dimensions, the affective (the subjective sensation of warmth) and the cognitive (the source of the warmth is 'out there beyond my body')
- affective (the subjective sensation of warmth) and the cognitive (the source of the warmth is 'out there beyond my body')
- that information is then memorised for later recall, prompting the possibility of a further stimulus (a shadow crossing the skin) emerging out of the change in awareness of potential significance created by comparing the initial stimulus with the second one
- this changed awareness of potential significance itself leads to a change in behaviour (here geared to survival – possibly by moving out of the comfort of

the sunlight into the less appealing darkness) where the ‘learning’ acknowledges that subjective sensation, however pleasurable, is sometimes not the most successful means of meeting the need to interact with the world (here the cognitive appreciation of an approaching predator being of ‘considerably more consequence to the animal’s survival than the ability to represent the body surface stimulus’).

Obviously, the amoeba-like creature in the real world would be restricted to the first two points above – but in the world of the thought experiment it is possible to postulate the more sophisticated behaviour of the remaining points; and given this greater freedom, Humphrey actually tells us two distinct things that are, in fact, closely linked: he indicates that there are different degrees or *depths* and ways of learning; and he describes a clear *process* of learning. In broad terms it is clear that the more developed the process the greater the depth of learning – if the amoeba-like creature did not interpret the initial stimulus of the sunlight as an indication of a world beyond its spatially-bound body enjoying the sensation of warmth then the second stimulus (the shadow) would be meaningless; and *making things meaningful* might stand as a workable definition of the learning process – if the meaningless shadow represented the approach of a predator, the amoeba would cease to be.

Roger Säljö of Gothenburg University published an interesting paper - ***Learning in the learner’s perspective (1979)*** - where he asked adult students what they understood by ‘learning’. He organised their responses into the following categories or levels:

1. Learning as a quantitative increase in knowledge – acquiring information or ‘knowing a lot’

2. Learning as memorising – storing information that can be reproduced
3. Learning as acquiring facts, skills, and methods that can be retained and used as necessary
4. Learning as making sense or abstracting meaning – relating parts of the subject matter to each other and to the real world
5. Learning as interpreting and understanding reality in a different way – comprehending the world by reinterpreting knowledge

This is interesting because these categories also demonstrate in a slightly different way Humphrey's suggestion of the twin nature of this thing we call 'learning': that it is both a product (stages 1-3) and a continuing process (stages 4 and 5). In terms of Humphrey's amoeba-like creature, stages 1-3 are also immediately recognisable as its primary response to the initial stimulus of the shaft of sunlight: it is something new; it is recognised if and when it happens again; and it can be used to compare differences as the need arises. But this response remains contingent on the external stimulus – without the sunlight, no information, no sense of another world beyond the amoeba-like creature as a self-enclosed organism.

In exactly the same way we can argue that for Säljö's adult students these first three categories (what we might call 'learning as product') reflect a situation where the learning essentially remains external: it is something acquired from outside either by the happenstance of experience or through a teacher or instructor; and it remains as discrete bits or bytes of information, little pebbles of knowledge to be regurgitated like the answers in a quiz – How many wives did

Henry VIII have? What is the state capital of Arizona? Who wrote ‘You’re The Top’?

Stages 4 and 5 are more complex. If (at the risk of oxymoron) we categorise stages 1-3 as fundamentally experiential/accidental or *passive* learning, then stages 4 and 5 describe a more *active* involvement on the part of the learner where the discrete pebbles of knowledge become synthesised into a more general appreciation of what things mean. A useful way of considering the difference would be to think in terms of where the learner’s *consciousness* of what is happening is most directed: in stages 1-3 the information acquired is concrete (warm sunlight; the sudden coolness of shadow), immediate and confined to something quite specific – the amoeba-like creature becomes aware of changing sensations on its skin; but in stages 4 and 5 the amoeba-like creature draws conclusions through comparison between the two different states of sunshine and shadow (essentially, that *something else* intervenes) and interprets that as potential danger – and thus moves from the concrete specific to a more abstract understanding of the potentiality of the outside world beyond. The learning becomes *purposive*: it helps the creature remain alive.

Obviously, an amoeba-like creature could not be said to have a sense of purpose in the way we normally think of the term – it does not yet have the mental capability. But in the world of the thought experiment the outcome of its survival reaction is akin to moving from the simple information that Henry VIII had six wives to learning about, for example, the political and religious tensions of the period, his own ambitions and dynastic pressures such as the perceived importance of male heirs, and through these towards appreciating something of why he married six times; or by discovering that as a young child he had suffered serious illnesses and later injuries that as he grew older increasingly distorted his

physical body and possibly his mental states, thus adding to our sense of why he behaved the way he did.

I want to spend a little more time on Humphrey's amoeba-like creature and its mental capability. In a very direct way mental capability, intelligence or 'mind' (and therefore 'learning') depends on the *physical* development of the brain. As Humphrey points out:

“In short, animals first had ‘minds’ when they first became capable of storing – and possibly recalling and reworking – action-based representations of the effects of environmental stimulation on their own bodies. The material substrate of the mind was nervous tissue, which in higher organisms became centred in a ganglion or brain; and it is to be remarked that even in animals like human beings the neural tube which forms the brain during embryological development derives from an infolding of the skin.”

No amoeba-like creature would have developed enough material substrate to qualify as having 'mind', and therefore its 'learning' would inevitably be limited to the simplest stimulus-response mechanism – but again, given that this is, after all, a thought experiment we should not be too harsh; it is meant to illustrate general principles. And the general principle at issue here is how 'learning' developed from stimulus-response to process. Humphrey is very helpful: at some point the sunlight and shadow move from sensations to representations of potentiality:

“In order that the same information could now be used to represent the outside world, a whole new style of processing had to evolve, with an emphasis less on the subjective present and more on object permanence, less on immediate responsiveness and more on future possibilities, less on what it is like for me and

more on how what ‘it’ signifies fits into the larger picture of a stable external world.

To cut a long story short, there developed in consequence two kinds of mental representation, involving very different styles of information processing. While one path led to the qualia of subjective feelings and first-person knowledge of the self, the other led to the intentional objects of cognition and objective knowledge of the external physical world.”

We are all caught between this dualism of balancing our sense of self with our sense of the otherness of the external physical world; and ‘learning’ inevitably happens within that same framework. At the risk of stretching the idea too far, I’m tempted to suggest that learning that is located within subjective feelings and first-person knowledge of the self is more immediate and graspable (even ontologically so necessary that we call it *innate*) whereas learning located within more objective knowledge is more difficult and requires formal endeavour because it is deeper and more abstract, and not simply experiential or accidental.

This division between experiential and formal learning formed part of the basis of Alan Rogers’ exploration of the area in ***What is the Difference? A new critique of adult learning and teaching (2003)***. Rogers formulated a slightly different terminology for the difference: he suggested that it might be more correct to think in terms of *task-conscious* (or acquisition learning from experience) and *learning-conscious* (or formalised learning through directed or guided tasks). It is not difficult, I would suggest, to see how these line up alongside the separated stages 1-3 and 4 and 5 of Säljö’s five categories.

Rogers argues that task-conscious learning arises not from the intention to learn but from the intention to complete a given task – such as changing a baby’s

nappy. The task becomes less problematic the more we do it because the simple repetition of the experience slowly reveals the best ways to approach it, the best materials to use, and so on. And there comes a point when the skills needed have been acquired primarily from the necessity of having to complete the task over and over again several times per day.

Formalised learning is the diametric opposite of this acquisition mechanism: it is based on guided episodes of instruction or elucidation where the learner is aware that the intention of such tasks is to learn; the tasks are structured rather than contingent events in everyday experience – “Learning itself is the task. What formalised learning does is to make learning more conscious in order to enhance it.”

Rogers conceives of a *continuum*: at one extreme lie those unintentional and often accidental events which occur all the time; then comes incidental or unconscious learning acquired in the course of some other activity; then experiential activities arising from immediate life-related concerns where the focus is still primarily on the task; then the shift towards more purposeful activities that disregard engagement with teachers and institutions; then come self-directed projects ... and so on. Rogers describes the other extreme as highly decontextualised learning using material common to all the learners without regard to their individual preferences, agendas or needs. It is readily apparent that for almost all examples in everyday life and practice it would be possible to argue that there is a tremendous blurring of boundaries between each of these categories.

Both Säljö and Rogers approach the problem of ‘learning’ from the intention of trying to uncover what it might be said to be in order that *teachers* might be better able to enhance their students’ success; they are concerned with ‘learning

theory', which attempts to organise and structure *practice* and *presentation of material* so that *experience* becomes more valuable in terms of (primarily) academic success for both the learner and the teacher. A workable definition of a good teacher might be along the lines of: one who creates an environment and sets tasks which *enable* or *empower* the pupils or students through stimulating their 'learning' skills by use of an appropriate engagement with different learning styles (some prefer visual presentation, some written, some practical – and so on). Nonetheless, too often formalised learning seems to stimulate reactions of boredom as much as curiosity, especially as children become more aware of what the psychologist Carl Rogers famously called “the poor helpless individual tied into his seat by ironclad bonds of conformity” - as Winston Churchill said: “I am always ready to learn although I do not always like being taught.”

Part of the reason for this is undoubtedly the fact that as we grow older we develop a thirst for more autonomy in our lives (Alan Rogers' reference above to individual preferences, agendas or needs) which comes into conflict with this increasing awareness of the straitjacket of conformity and the social rules which require certain academic qualifications and competencies before allowing entry into the sphere of work and the professions. Every university I have visited has graffiti (often deep in the bowels of the main library) complaining of the educational mill, which grinds out each year the requisite number of automata ready to fill the spaces in the workforce vacated by those who went before. It is, at bottom, a clash of the social intention with the personal one: the teacher is required to follow increasingly centralised curricula (of which s/he is a successful product, of course) *irrespective* of the individual desires or intentions of those being taught.

At this point I want to add a note to what Rogers calls the learning-conscious process: I would argue that another fundamental shaping force is the question of

the *intentionality* of the learner. Every teacher ought to be aware that (especially in adult classes) there will be a variety of reasons why the people staring back are there: usually to acquire a qualification that will in some way enhance promotion prospects or career change; sometimes out of a sense of earlier missed opportunities; occasionally out of pure interest in the subject; and so on. And sometimes there can be a mismatch in perception between teacher and adult student: the teacher could be task-conscious (focused on teaching a particular skill in a particular way) while the student could be learning-conscious (more concerned with how the skill might fit into a wider repertoire of skills rather than on exercising it in the approved way).

Thus we arrive at my explanation of Laurie's observation: it seems to me that something like this mismatch of perceptions of the nature of the task is at the root of the conflict between her instructors and herself. The instructor perceives his role as primarily a provider of *training*, where the desired outcome is for all members of the class to develop the same technique in the same way through a process of imitation or mimesis; whereas Laurie is concerned with enhancing her *education*, in understanding more fully how the skill *works* rather than in being satisfied merely to reproduce it.

Along with more detailed exploration of learning styles and the broad 'families' into which most learning theories fit (there are *dozens* of them), the vexed question of the difference between training and education must wait for another day.

Holiday Breakdown

by LAURIE JANE KERN on DECEMBER 1, 2009

I am referring to my work area, not my mental health!

At this time of the year, I have to admit that I turn into a bit of a grouch. I like to stay away from the stores and nest in my office/studio and in the past I would make a quilt or sew myself some clothing during this time of the year.

This year I am planning on doing the same but I have to clean up and put away all of my silver and metal tools to do so - as my sewing table and my cutting table have been doing double duty.

And as my friends have reminded me, I only started down this path in January 2009! Though I did start making cabs back in September 2008. Really it has only been a year, how far I have come.

SO - tomorrow I am putting all the tools away; organizing the random leftover jump ring and wire; washing the table tops and giving the floor a good mopping. Then I can bring my sewing machine out of it's storage position below the table, get out the fabric and start cutting the quilt.

Don't fret - I have a few items to finish up and take pictures of, so those will get posted soon and I will also post a few extra pictures of the quilt in its various stages of construction and assembly.

Chasing the Winter Blues Away

by LAURIE JANE KERN *on* DECEMBER 7, 2009 ·

I have spent the day walking around half asleep as it was a cold windy and today it is pouring down rain.

Why am I sooooo tired? I was in a two day Chasing and Repousse with [Nancy Megan Corwin](#) which was held at the [Jay Whaley Studio](#) in San Diego. And let me tell you, being tired today was a very small price to pay for the experience.

Where do I begin to tell you what was covered - EVERYTHING

Where do I begin to tell you what I learned - A LOT

Where do I begin to tell you about the fellow students - SUCH A WONDERFUL GROUP OF PEOPLE

Nancy has such a reputation that 3 students flew in from out of town just for the class. They came from Reno Nevada, Chicago (Area) Illinois, and Oberlin, Oh-oh-Ohio. Nancy brought copies of her book and many of the items shown in the pictures. We all just wanted to run away with them.

So, lets get started...

Just a fraction of the tools Nancy brought.



In the pot and marked with the lining has been completed



In the pitch pot - backside up for doing repousse



Turned and ready for chasing



Nancy showing us how to undercut



My finished piece!



For additional pictures look at this [flickr](#) photo stream from fellow student Elizabeth (how cold is it in Ohio today?)

{ 5 comments... }

Elizabeth in Oh-oh-ohio 12.08.09 at 9:14 am

It's 36.5 degrees with 70% humidity and 30% chance of snow. Yes, it's going to snow today. Thanks for your article:)-Elizabeth

Jerry Fowler 12.08.09 at 5:18 pm

Sounds like a great class to take. In the one flickr photo it looks like your all asking for divine intervention for a successful day. Nice little leaf that you finished up with.

Laurie Jane Kern 12.08.09 at 6:13 pm

Elizabeth,

Well once the rain stopped last night we had over 2" of rain fall at our house and when I woke up this morning it was a chilly 35F outside. As we like to say "A fine scottish summer day!"

David Stitt 12.11.09 at 7:50 am

Depends where in Ohio you are. In Cleveland, my computer tells me 21F outside. But because the dreaded Steelers got their comeuppance last night, today feels sunny & warm.

Mmm—nice work on the leaf; thanks for sharing.

Laurie Jane Kern 12.11.09 at 4:20 pm

David, I went to Case in Cleveland, I too was happy to hear that the Browns actually won (=)

Sew What! (and the call of the pitch pot)

by LAURIE JANE KERN on DECEMBER 21, 2009 ·

A few weeks ago I wrote a post about taking a break from the metal work and how I was going to sew a quilt like I usually do around the end of the year. I did take

down and put away my jewelry/smithing studio which really is my sewing area. I had to do this so I could work on a quilt that has been waiting for my attention for several months. I put all my tools and supplies in the tool boxes. I took all the layers of butcher paper off the sewing table and wiped everything down and then I set up the sewing machine. I also cleared off my large rolling cutting table; laid out my cutting matt, rotary cutter, quilt pattern and my fabrics.

Then December 5th and 6th came around and I was in the Chasing & Repousse workshop with Nancy Megan Corwin.

The following weekend, December 12th & 13th; I spent about 3 hours on Saturday cutting my fabrics and then I spent another two hours sewing the initial fabric strips together. Sunday afternoon was taken up with cutting these strips into triangles which would be sewn into squares.

Monday rolled around and I found I did not want to sew and what I really wanted to do was play with my pitch pot and try to do some repousse.

I felt as if I had betrayed my sewing machine!

I have this problem - I believe that if you start something you should finish it; I honor my commitments. I think it has only been once that I did not finish a book, When reading - you finish the book, no matter how bad it is! Trust me there have been some really really bad books that I have read. I start a quilt, I finish it and if I don't like it, I give it to someone who does.

Monday night, after work, I confessed to my husband - I don't want to sew. He said it was ok to put the quilt away and that these things happen, but I still felt guilty. After dinner I went up to my office, poured myself a nice glass of single

malt and proceeded to stack everything up and I put the quilt pattern, uncut material and cut material into a tote and put it into the closet (where I did not have to look at it).

I closed the closet door.

Lightening did not strike the house or me.

The world did not end! (I am not a bad person)

My Year in Review - 2009

by LAURIE JANE KERN *on* DECEMBER 24, 2009

First I want to thank everyone for their wonderful support over this past year. It has been amazing and considering I only started my blog at the end of March that's NINE months, not even a full year. And to think I really started down this path in February with my very first silver soldering class.

I have made over 47 posts, not including this one, during those 9 months and I have been sent almost 80 comments.

Over this year I have learned the following:

- Silver Soldering
- Make chain maille and other types of chains
- Bezel set stones
- Braid silver
- Make a ring, no make that rings of several different types
- Alloy and cast my own ingots
- Use a rolling mill; make wire, sheet and do roller printing.

- Use a hydraulic press
- Basic fold forming
- Basic Chasing & Repousse
- Sink a bowl
- Raise metal (I did this last week, way cool)
- NOT to rush with my work
- Take notes and pictures
- Be happy when it fails and be happier when it succeeds
- Purchase metal when the price is low, save all your scrap and dust and recast these scraps when the price is high.
- Be thankful to my husband for being so supportive when I spend money to do all of this!

Happy New Year to you all, and may next year be great for YOU and your craft

Four Days of Fun

by LAURIE JANE KERN *on* DECEMBER 26, 2009

At this point only 3 days have gone by but with tomorrow it will be four - four wonderful days to sleep late, stay in my jammies {sorry if that is TMI!} and playing with metals.

Thursday, I started a repousse piece for a friend, which I finished yesterday. It is only the third piece I have done. The first piece, the leaf, was in the Nancy Megan Corwin workshop the weekend of December 5th and 6th. The second piece was a Trinity celtic knot - which I totally messed up.

I bought the starter set of tools from MettleWorks [<http://www.mettleworks.com>] on Monday the 7th and they arrived in 3 days. So these 10 tools were all I had at my disposal. I started a Trinity Celtic Knot and I had the lining done in one night and then over the next two nights I had most of the

repousse done on the back. It fit on a 3.5" square and sat nicely in the pitch pot. Then on Sunday the 13th, I turned it over and started the undercutting and planishing. I then [you know where this is going] I decided that I wanted the domed area of the knot a bit more angular. I SHOULD HAVE stopped and turned it back over, but did I do that noooooooooo! I now have a Trinity knot that is a great example of what NOT [sorry for the pun] to do!

It was back to the drawing board for me! Which is why I started a new piece on Thursday. I just finished cleaning it up and de-warping it.

Today I went back to a bowl I started sinking on December 12th. I grabbed the wrong gauge sheet 16 - it should have been 18! and by the time I had sawed out half the circle (6" diameter) and gone through 4 saw blades - that was when I figured something was not correct. Working with the thicker gauge really is harder to work with - it takes longer to anneal it, harder to hammer and form and my arms get tired sooner so I also have to take breaks more often [which is why I blogging now!].

The bowl is only halfway sunk. I have at least 2 or 3 more complete rounds to go before I even start planishing. I figure I can get another round done today, a round or two tomorrow, Sunday. And if all goes well, next weekend I can true it up, planish it and form the handle which is a corner that I did not cut round. This corner only adds to the complexity since it prevents the shape from forming easily and then when get near it with the hammering, it curls inward making the bowl hard to hold.

So between all the various steps - waiting for pitch to cool, waiting for metal to pickle, I have also been building out my website and I have posted lots of pictures there. Go take a look at **kernology** at <http://www.kernology.com>

{ 4 comments... }

Wendy Edsall-Kerwin 12.25.09 at 7:44 am

That really is an amazing list of accomplishments for (what I assume is) two semesters worth of metalworking! I've never alloyed and cast my own ingots and then rolled them down, that's super old school! I love that you learned not to rush your work. My metalsmithing teacher, Doug Bucci, always said "slow is fast" and those are words I try live by (at least in the studio;^). Keep up the good work in the new year!

Laurie Jane Kern 12.25.09 at 8:13 am

Wendy, Thanks for the comment - I read your blog too!

And truth be told, I am not "in school" so there are no semesters. And I do have a day job (I am an engineer)

I either take classes/workshops at local studios or teach myself. The classes are mostly one day-ers! but the following few weekends I make sure I make something else with my new skills.

Alloying and using the rolling mill are the best skills to have, I needed some a 12" piece 8 gauge wire for a bracelet. Do you know how expensive that is since it is not a highly used gauge?? I cast my ingot from my scraps, and then rolled it - all told it took about an hour!

For pictures, on all the classes I took this year, go to <http://www.kernology.com>

Boot~C 01.01.10 at 6:07 pm

great tray! I will be starting my next metal/jewelry class in a few weeks. I really love your bowls & I want to take pictures of them to class to ask about learning how to make them, may I? Man o man I would love to be learning on a hydrolic

press & turning rims. My teacher did take photos of a few of my pieces @ our last class, if you would like to see them they are posted on my blog.

Boot~C 01.01.10 at 6:09 pm

ummm p/s hydraulic, I meant to spell!

Today, I AM a Metalsmith!!!

by LAURIE JANE KERN on DECEMBER 28, 2009

Yesterday afternoon I finished my bowl and for the first time, I actually felt like a metalsmith, classification - Copper. I have not taken the risk of silver YET.

Saturday I was able to finish 2 rounds of hammering and annealing. I did find that I did not get as tired but damn, that 16 gauge is hard to work with so after the second anneal, I was rather proud of myself as it really was looking like a bowl at this point but I left it in the pickle pot and went upstairs to veg with a good murder mystery DVD.

Sunday morning I took the bowl out of the pickle, cleaned it up and was able to get a single trip around the bowl done before noon but then stopped as I had company coming. I went back to the hammering at about 5-ish, went around the bowl 2 more times and then decided I should stop - the shape was good.

Now during all of this, I had curved the extra point outward and down so it did not interfere with the hammering or my hand. On this last round I had to flatten it out as it was preventing me from getting a curve on the side where the point was jutting out. It was then onto planishing and it being only 6pm, I decided to finish.

Small hammer tap's, around and around I went slowly working my way from the center bottom moving outwards and upwards to the rim. Then I got to the point - literally and I could not bend it in a curve outward and down.

I'm not implying that it was physical NOT - I was capable of doing .

It was an emotional thing.

Here was this bowl with a point sticking up in the air and then I just knew it had to be curved over to the inside. I not only had to curve it over inward, it's shape, across it's base, had to be curved to follow the imaginary rim as well.

I resisted re-annealing the point and luckily since I had not done any hammering on it since I started this last round, I found that I could use my forging hammer and get a curve into it. Then I placed the point over the horn of my anvil and gently beat it down and over.

And it sang it's name to me - Teardrop, and I knew I was a metalsmith at that point. It was at 7:30 pm on December 27, 2009.

I went upstairs to my office. I air planished a flat on the bottom and with 2 files and gently de-burred the rim inside and out. I rounded ever so slightly the point of the tear.

I was done.

I still have to stamp my name on the bottom and yes, this is not the most professional pictures but here it is.

BTW, I now want to make more of them!



The final post for 2009 and a copper tray/dish

by LAURIE JANE KERN on DECEMBER 31, 2009

This is it everyone, it is already 2010 in some places and in about 8 hours, 2009 will slip quietly by - into the past, here in Southern California.

I have spent the past two days working on a copper tray/dish. It is for Elisa of Scotland who asked for THREE copper bowls to put her bling into.

FYI, I am the maker [most] of said bling. Over the past year, as I was learning to solder silver by making chains, pendants and rings, Elisa would always ask for a copy - that and a few things she also wanted but I had not made for myself. Really, she was challenging me to go outside my safe zone.

Once I had mastered the art of sinking a small bowl out of a copper disk, there was the request: "Could I have three wee copper bowls to put my bling into?" [again use *your* bad Gallic brogue here]. After some more discussion we

decided on a small one for the earrings, a medium sized one for the rings and chain bracelets and a tray for the cuff bracelets and larger items.

The small bowl which is approximately 2" in diameter and about an 1.5" deep and the medium sized bowl of 3" in diameter and about 2" deep were sent off at the beginning of the month.

The tray dish was another matter. I had just learned about raising and could not decide if I should sink the tray or raise it. Then my T-Stake arrived yesterday. I had to do it - the tray had to be raised. I drew out my oval, cut my copper and drew the line where the bottom would turn into the sides.

Into the garage I went at 6 pm with my hammers, stake and hope. I needed hope because my side wall was only going to be about 1" high and that's not much to work with. I got one round done, annealed the copper and put into the pickle for the night.

At 11 am this morning, I got my hammers, stake, cleaned copper and went back into the garage. After two rounds, making a total of three, I knew it was done. I planished it and took it upstairs for the final trim and cleaning. It is now 5:00 pm.

It is now done and I am so proud. I DID IT and it did not end up in the scrap bin
YIPPEEEEE

Yes, I know there are chatter marks on the inside edge from the stake and my hammers but HEY, this is only the second thing I have raised.

Here is a picture. And to see more, follow this link to [Kernology](#)



{ 4 comments... }

Aulë 12.29.09 at 8:47 am

Museum quality!

Marc Zyla 12.30.09 at 11:42 pm

The bowl is beautiful. I've been wanting to do something like this for quite a while. Can't figure out what class to take; any suggestions?

"M"

Diane 01.03.10 at 11:33 pm

This is absolutely beautiful. Nice job!

Helen Hill 01.06.10 at 9:59 am

Wow Laurie, that's gorgeous!!!